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John Ellis Coulter





JOHN ELLIS COULTER

*Small-Town Businessman*

*of Tarheelia*

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JOHN ELLIS COULTER AND LUCY ANN PROPST ABOUT THE TIME OF THEIR MARRIAGE.

# JOHN ELLIS COULTER

## *Small-Town Businessman of Tarheelia*

By

ELLIS MERTON COULTER

PRIVATELY PRINTED

1962

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## CONTENTS

I. ANCESTRY .....	1
II. YOUTH AND MARRIAGE.....	12
III. IN THE "NATION"—FIELD AND FOREST.....	24
IV. IN THE "NATION"—OTHER BUSINESS.....	36
V. HAPPY HOME-ICARD-CONNELLY SPRINGS.....	50
VI. MERCHANT .....	66
VII. MILLMAN .....	78
VIII. HOME AND FARM.....	100
IX. STOCKMAN .....	115
X. MIDDLEMAN AND AGENT.....	129
XI. THE RISE AND DECLINE OF CONNELLY SPRINGS .....	145
XII. RUTHERFORD COLLEGE, VALDESE, AND MORGANTON.....	163
XIII. POLITICS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT.....	182
XIV. EDUCATIONAL, RELIGIOUS, AND OTHER ACTIVITIES .....	194
XV. CHILDREN .....	211
XVI. BUSINESS METHODS .....	223
XVII. THE END OF THE ROAD .....	234

## ILLUSTRATIONS

John Ellis Coulter and Lucy Ann Propst  
about the Time of their Marriage..... *Frontispiece*

*Following Page 24*

Marker on Old Coulter Cemetery  
Old Coulter Cemetery Knoll in the Valley of the South Fork River  
Log Barn near the House-Site of Martin Coulter, Jr.  
Philip Coulter Log House as it Appeared in 1962  
Catawba County Belles of the 1880's  
Calling Cards of the 1880's



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Cousin Emma Hildebrand  
Coulter's Marriage Certificate

*Following Page 40*

Coulter's Early Spencerian Script  
Loom and Weave House, Holly Tree, and Old Philip Coulter Log  
Residence  
Map of Burke and Catawba Counties  
Mills at Tucker Shoals on Jacobs Fork River  
Coulter's Early Letterhead (1888), Using "Connellys Springs" Post  
Office  
Map of Connelly Springs in the Early Twentieth Century

*Following Page 56*

Stewart Place (Renovated), in Connelly Springs  
Coulter Residence, Built in 1893  
Store Ledger Account Book, Burnt in the Fire of 1897  
Pond, Built in the Middle 1890's  
Signatures of Kin, Friends, and Businessmen

*Following Page 72*

Postmarks of Towns in which Coulter had Business Dealings  
Letterheads of Coulter's Businesses in Connelly Springs  
Statement of Account Due, Order on Merchant  
Letterheads of Coulter (Agent) and Coulter Companies  
Blank Quotation Sheet, Used during the 1890's  
Checks Given by Coulter, 1883-1893

*Following Page 120*

Checks Given by Coulter, 1903-1929  
Livestock Letterheads and Business Card  
Southern Railway Station



Hoosiers Knob, Looking East from Railway Station; Standpipe in  
Foreground, Cotton Mill Beyond  
Train Approaching Connelly Springs from the West  
South Mountains, Hoosiers Knob on the Extreme Left

*Following Page 152*

Uncle Billy Hill  
Hugh Southerland, Sr.  
George A. Hauss, Railway Water Tank in Background  
J. M. (Mort) Sides, Railway Station and Pink Hudson's Store in  
Background  
Connelly Springs Hotel, Hotel Springhouse, and Morganton  
Courthouse  
Letterheads of Connelly Springs Business-Houses  
Various Letterheads, Connelly Springs and Elsewhere  
Letterheads of Organizations in which Coulter was an Official

*Following Page 168*

Letterheads of Various Organizations with which Coulter Dealt  
Bob Reese  
Rutherford College  
Waldensian Church

*Following Page 216*

Coulter and Wife, off for a Sunday Visit  
Coulter's Office  
Rutherford College Commencement Crowd in 1899, Coulter Second  
from Right on Ground; Uncle Billy Hill, Fourth from Left on  
Ground  
Coulter in Middle Age

## PREFACE

THE information on which this book is based has come from the John Ellis Coulter Collection of manuscript materials; from newspapers, books, pamphlets, county official records, and other documents; from the researches and memories of several people; and from the memory of the author himself.

In his business affairs and correspondence Coulter had the habit of never throwing away anything except rubbish; but in his later life and after his death some of this collection disappeared. However there was left more than ten thousand pieces, mostly business records and letters addressed to him. He made copies of little of what he wrote. For a few years in later life he kept a diary. This collection has been basic in the narrative which follows.

The most valuable newspapers were: *Western Carolinian*, *Press and Carolinian*, and *Times Mercury* (all published in Hickory); and *Morganton Herald*, *Burke County News*, *News-Herald*, and *Farmer's Friend* (all published in Morganton). All of these papers were consulted in the North Carolina State Library in Raleigh.

Several books came in handy on certain topics, as George B. Watts, *The Waldensians in the New World* (Durham, 1941); and reports and minutes of several organizations provided important information, such as the annual reports to the stockholders of the Western North Carolina Rail Road Company, the minutes of several of the synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the minutes of the Board of Education of Burke County. The Deed Records in the courthouses of Catawba and Burke counties were consulted for land transactions.

For the early history of the Coulter family (but not including the theory of its Scottish origin), Dr. Victor A. Coulter, formerly Professor of Chemistry and Dean of the College of Liberal Arts of the University of Mississippi, gave invaluable assistance. Mr. John S. Johnston of Glasgow, Scotland, an authority on Scottish emigrations, gave outstanding help on the subject of the Coulter families of Scotland.

Mrs. Jesse M. Teas (Laura Coulter), Mrs. R. L. Quickel (Louise Coulter), Mrs. B. L. Long (Lois Coulter), Mrs. J. Guy Cline (Lura

Robinson), Mrs. Louis S. Setzer (Cora Bolick), Mrs. Agnes McLean (Agnes Connelly Lowe), Mrs. David W. Alexander (Junie Abernethy), Mrs. J. C. McGalliard (Jennie Hudson), the late Mrs. Jennie Cannon Wilson, Mr. Fred Hudson, Sr., Mr. Hugh Southerland, Jr., Mr. Eubert P. Rutherford, and the late Horace Connelly Goode—all were helpful on certain topics.

The General Services Administration of the National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D. C., obligingly responded to many inquiries on the post office history of Connelly Springs, as did the General Services Administration, Federal Records Center in St. Louis, on matters relating to the Rural Free Delivery service.

No attempt has been made to engage in "fine writing," but rather the purpose has been to use in many instances the idiom and vernacular of the time and the place, as the best method of capturing the atmosphere of a century that has past—John Ellis Coulter was born in 1861; the manuscript of this book was written in 1961. It is hoped that the made-up word of Tarheelia in the title, from Tar Heel (North Carolina, the Tar Heel State), will offend no one's eyes or sensibilities. Although it should appear to any reader that here is much economic, as well as social, educational, and religious, history, yet this book has been written primarily for John Ellis Coulter's descendants, his kith and kin, and for those who knew him or who knew well any of his children; and for all these it should be of interest and by them best appreciated and its trivialities understood.

E. M. C.





## CHAPTER I

### ANCESTRY

**I**N historical times the Coulter family first appeared in Scotland, and more particularly in southeast Lanarkshire, where between the upper Clyde and Tweed rivers there were in modern times two villages (Culter and Culterhaigh), two peaks (Culter Fell and Culter Cleah Shank), and a stream (Culter Water) attesting the ancient prominence of the family. The name from the beginning went through various spellings: Culter, possibly Kultre, Kolter, Colter, Coalter, and Coulter. The last spelling came to be almost universal for the family name. In 1962 the name was not uncommon in Scotland, there being a village by that name in Aberdeenshire, and in Glasgow alone there were about fifty families by that name.

The geographical concentration of the name indicates that the family was Lowland Scotch, and, therefore, actually English in earlier times. The movement of many of the Lowland Scots to North Ireland in the time of King James I gave the family a location there also; and the great migration of the Scotch-Irish to America in the eighteenth century brought along some of these Coulters.

The American origin of the Coulter family under discussion here does not conform with these explanations. The ancestor of this particular branch of the Coulter family came to America not from Scotland or Ireland but from the Lower or Rhine Palatinate. And he came under the name of Johann Martin Kolter, and not as one of three brothers (that ancient and widespread persistent myth common among many families as to their American origin). He sailed from Rotterdam on the ship *Dragon* and landed at Philadelphia on September 26, 1749.

Of course it now becomes necessary to explain how he could have been of the Scottish family of Coulters. It is well known that the Scots migrated in great numbers as early as the so-called Middle

Ages, at first going to the continent of Europe and later to America. A competent authority has estimated that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries "several hundred thousand Scots" went to Central and Northern Europe. In the early sixteenth century a large number of Scottish mercenary archers in the employ of Francis I of France were left stranded in Northern Italy after the disastrous defeat of the French there. They moved into a mountain village in the Piedmonte, intermarried with the natives, and still in the twentieth century their influence was evident in more than 800 words of Scottish origin.

Farther to the northward in the Rhine Palatinate other Scots undoubtedly settled and became a part of the permanent population. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the ancestors of Johann Martin Kolter were some of these Scots; but when they came is unknown. It is likely that they came in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century; for as will later appear, though these Coulters Germanized their name into Kolter, Johann Martin was not so completely Germanize himself as to want to remain on the Rhine or to marry a German. (It should be understood that the Scottish origin of Johann Martin Kolter is an assumption without proof.)

He was probably in his 'teens when he landed at Philadelphia in 1749. He Anglicized his name into Colter, which soon came to be almost universally spelled Coulter. Anglicizing the German names of the Pennsylvania Dutch became a common practice. Johann Martin Kolter now became simply Martin Colter, dropping the Johann. He was soon settled in Berks County, where he came in contact with the Boones and other English families, and may well have become acquainted with some of the Coulters who had preceded him, coming directly from Ireland as well as from Scotland, for at this time there was a considerable number of Coulters in America. Five Coulters from New York were in the French and Indian War; and the first United States census, in 1790, records 41 families of Coulters, living in every state from Massachusetts through New York and Pennsylvania to Georgia, with 26 families living in Pennsylvania alone.

At an unknown time Martin Coulter married Catherine Rosanna Boone, who was a daughter of Joseph Boone--Joseph being a brother of Squire Boone, who was the father of the famous Daniel. The migration of English and Pennsylvania Dutch families to the southward was now in full swing, and Martin Coulter became part of it. It is thought that he might have come with the group which included the Boones. Coulter stopped in the valley of the South Fork River in the Province of North Carolina, while the Boones settled in the

Yadkin River Valley, to the eastward. This South Fork region was in Anson County from 1749 to 1762, in Mecklenburg from 1762 to 1768, in Tryon from 1768 to 1779, and in Lincoln from 1779 to 1842, when it became part of Catawba County. It was possibly in Burke County before 1782, when part of Burke was annexed to Lincoln, and the boundary line was obscure until 1826 when it was finally run.

The first grant of land which Coulter received was on April 6, 1765, amounting to 520 acres. It lay on the east bank of the South Fork, about two miles below the point where Jacobs Fork and Henrys Fork flowed together to make the South Fork River (a tributary of the Catawba River), and a little less than a mile north of the Rocky Ford on the South Fork. He built his home, made of logs, over a spring for convenience and especially so in case of Indian attacks. In 1769 he acquired additional land.

His son, Martin, Jr. moved farther up the hill, where he constructed a "roomy log house, two large rooms with a chimney and a huge fireplace built of native stone and a roomy attic reached by an enclosed winding stairway, with no partitions in it" (as described by one who had this information from another who had seen the house).

Martin Coulter and his wife Catherine Rosanna had four children: Martin, Jr., John, Philip, and Catherine. Martin, Jr. died in 1847 and was buried in the Grace Church Cemetery, not far away.

Both Martin, the Pioneer, and his son Martin, Jr. took some part in the Revolution against King George III. Years later a granddaughter of Martin, Jr. remembered "the great interest with which she often listened to her grandfather tell of his or his father's experiences in the war and of the anxiety they, at times, felt for the success of the colonies; how, about the year 1780, the father, though past military age, went with his son to the front and joined the ranks. Particularly vivid was her recollection of the description of an encounter with some of Cornwallis' men, in which the father came perilously near being captured." (Told to her kinsman John C. Coulter sometime before 1925). Thus, it appears that Martin, Sr. and Martin, Jr. were in the Battle of King's Mountain, though the father may have been going along with his son more as an individual than as an officially enlisted soldier. It was stated in the pension petition of Martin, Jr. that "in consequence of his being seized with what was called camp-fever he obtained a furlough and was taken home by his father."

In 1797 Martin, the Pioneer, sold to his son Philip for 100 pounds a tract of 402 acres lying to the northward up the South Fork River, where Philip built a log house, which, with additions, served his



family and succeeding generations of his descendants into the twentieth century. The house was still standing, unoccupied, in 1962.

Philip married Clara Wise, and by her there were seven children: Henry, Daniel, Elizabeth, Catherine, Mary, David, and Anna. When he died he was buried in the old family cemetery on a knoll near the banks of the South Fork River, on the land of the original grant to Martin Coulter, the Pioneer. He was born in 1763 and died in 1840. Also his wife Clara (1764-1841) was buried there. It seems that this spot had been selected as the site for the family cemetery in 1793, when Ephraim Coulter, a son of Martin, Jr., was buried there. He was followed by Martin, the Pioneer, in 1808, and by his wife Catherine Rosanna Boone in 1813. None of the graves was marked except by rough unhewn stones, and not until 1961 was this old cemetery properly identified and marked with a list of those who were supposed to be resting there.

Philip's son Daniel (November 26, 1787-July 23, 1862) married Nancy Ann Stilwell (March 31, 1799-June 28, 1858) and to this union came eleven children: Eli Summey, Harriet Louise, Elisha Monroe, Mary Caroline, Elizabeth Emily, Catherine Malinda, Ann Angeline, Eliza Fertima, Sarah Tobartha (twin of Eliza), Louise Minerva, and Philip Augustus.

Daniel, as well as his ancestors, was a middle class yeoman farmer. The Coulters were not large slaveholders (as, indeed, there were none such in Catawba County), though some Coulters owned a few slaves. Martin, the Pioneer, owned one, and some of his descendants owned more, but Daniel owned none. All possessed a hundred or more acres of land each. For instance, in 1850 Daniel owned 148 acres, 100 of which he cultivated. He had 3 milch cows and 3 other head of cattle, 12 sheep, 18 hogs, and 3 horses. When the census man came around, Daniel had on hand 600 bushels of corn, 50 bushels each of wheat and oats, 31 bushels of sweet potatoes, 15 bushels of Irish potatoes, 50 pounds of butter, 2 tons of hay, 15 pounds of flax, 2 bushels of flax seed, and a smokehouse containing \$80.00 worth of slaughtered animals.

He listed no cotton, because if he had raised any he had sold it or more likely he did not raise that staple at all. Catawba County had not yet gone into cotton-raising; in 1860 it produced only 173 bales of 400 pounds each. Neither was the county a slave-plantation region, where cotton could best be produced. Out of a total population of 10,729, only 1,664 were slaves. There were 32 free Negroes. The farms in the county numbered 1,078 with only two having from 500 to 1,000 acres. There were 209 farmers owning from 100 to 500 acres. Daniel Coulter came in this group. All the other Catawba



County farmers owned farms of less than 100 acres. So, it is evident that Daniel Coulter was considerably better off in his farming operations than the great majority of the farmers in the county.

With other possessions in varying amounts, some of which the census man was not interested in, Daniel and his eleven children led respectable if not affluent lives. He was either a Lutheran or of the German Reformed Church—the various branches of the Coulter family were scattered among both of these denominations. The Daniel Coulter line of the family had intermarried with the Boones, the Wises, the Stilwells, the Conrads, the Frys, the Smiths, the Raiders, the Detters, the Johnsons, the Harrises, the Pooveys, the Bosts, the Hildebrands, the Setzers, the Huffmans, the Plonks, and even others—all of whom were in varying degrees part of the kindred or “the connection,” a word often used to denote the kindred. At least two important church houses in the vicinity were long used by both denominations—Grace and St. Pauls.

Philip Augustus was Daniel's youngest child, out of this very considerable brood of eleven children. He was born on June 15, 1834 (died January 17, 1903) and on September 7, 1858 married Mary Elvira Plonk (January 8, 1834-February 2, 1925) of Gaston County. By 1858, when Philip Augustus married and when in the same year his mother died, the household had become practically empty, for he was the youngest and was now twenty-four years old—the others having married or otherwise moved out. His sister Eliza had married Israel Hildebrand and had gone to Paris, Texas, to live. The others had remained in North Carolina.

It was rather to be expected that Daniel would want his son Philip Augustus to set up house-keeping in the old home and take care of him for the remainder of his days. And so it was, for on March 8, 1859 Daniel sold his son Philip Augustus the home place with its 148 acres, but with the provision that Daniel should retain “a life interest in one half of said Lands and privilege of the dwelling home & out buildings the same as may be necessary for his comfort & convenience during lifetime & the said Philip Coulter & heirs are to render him such attendance in sickness as the said Daniel Coulter may need.”

The marriage of Philip Augustus to Mary Elvira Plonk brought in more of the Pennsylvania Dutch line of descent. A typical expression of the Gaston County Plonks to their kin in Catawba County was, “I am anxious to hear from you Catawba Dutch.” The North Carolina pioneer of the Plonk family was Jacob Plonk, who had migrated from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. He had a son Jacob (II), who had a son Jacob (III); and it was this Jacob who was the father of Mary Elvira Plonk. Her mother was Katie Costner and her

maternal grandmother was Barbara Rudisill. Katie Costner, who married Jacob Plonk, was born June 25, 1793; she died October 11, 1862. The Plonks, like the Coulters, had fought in the war of the Revolution against their King.

Philip's and Mary's first child, a boy named LeRoy, was born July 24, 1859, and died in infancy when a little more than a year old—September 30, 1860. The next child was born March 22, 1861, on Friday morning at 8 o'clock, and was given the name John Ellis. His familiar title was Ellis or John or John Ellis. Thereafter five more children were born: Catherine Augusta (Katie) (February 6, 1865-January 28, 1952. Married Raymond W. Robinson. Children: Lura Mary Lizzie [Mrs. Joseph Guy Cline], Russell Alfred, Philip Homer, and Essie Lea [Mrs. Robert Beverly]); James Franklin (Frank) (June 4, 1866-September 14, 1944. Married Della Parker. Children: Ruth, Robert, Margaret, and Frances); Claudius Craig (Claud) (July 18, 1872-July 28, 1936) (For Claud's family see page 43); Philip Elkana (Phil, "Ton") (January 31, 1875-April 12, 1958. On November 27, 1895, married Nancy Catherine Finger [October 25, 1876-November 6, 1961]. Children: Harry Bryan, Lois Elizabeth [Mrs. Benjamin L. Long], Philip Plonk, Margaret Finger [Mrs. Percy Noell], James Daniel, Albert Sidney, and Nancy Mills); the last, a son, died in infancy, less than a month old (July 17, 1877-August 10, 1877).

Philip Elkana carried among his kindred a nickname throughout life, "Ton," a name which was derived from the way he called himself in childhood, "Tonny Boy," for "Sonny Boy." One of Frank's childish tomfooleries always remembered was: When sitting out on a rail fence, supposedly preaching a sermon, he would shout out, "Who made the rooster to crow? I didn't. Who made the birds to sing? I didn't. Who made the crows to fly? I didn't."

Exactly three weeks after John Ellis had been born, Confederate soldiers fired on Fort Sumter, at the entrance of Charleston harbor—a shot if not heard round the world, was heard all over the Confederacy and throughout the North. For a generation bitterness had been developing between Northerners and Southerners over the question of slavery and other issues. It had come to a head in November, 1860, when Abraham Lincoln was elected president of the United States. South Carolina seceded from the Union in December; and in May, 1861 North Carolina followed. The Confederate States of America had been organized in the preceding February, which finally included eleven states (some people say there were thirteen) of the old Union.

Great excitement prevailed everywhere, and probably Philip Augustus Coulter was not among those least carried away, though it



would seem that this excitement would not have propelled him into volunteering; for he had a wife, an infant child, and a widowed father to take care of. Apparently he took steps at once to enlist but the company he joined was not accepted, as was noted by this sentence in a letter which his cousin J. T. Conrad wrote him on July 9, 1861, from Camp Carolina near Norfolk, Virginia, "I am sorrow that your company will not be receive only as regular." Conrad had joined the Catawba Rifles, who were now spoiling for a fight. In giving the army news, he told of one of the soldiers on guard duty going to sleep and how he might have been shot for it: "it is a shooting matter. That is the worst thing a man can do in camp. I stood guard the other night and I wasent well and I had lost a greateal of sleep and I had liken to went to sleep on post but I tell [you] I thought of the concequencies and that was enough to keep enny body a wake." He was hungry for news: "Tell me all about the times in Catawba [County]. Tell me how many shock of wheat you raised and whether it is good or bad."

The death of Daniel, Philip Augustus' father, in 1862 might have made it easier for the son to go to war despite the fact that his wife Mary Elvira with her child John Ellis, scarcely a year old, would have to shift for herself; but whether or not his zeal for fighting had been assisted by the Confederate Conscription laws, on July 1, 1862 he went over to Newton, the county seat, and enlisted in Company E of the Fifty-Seventh North Carolina Regiment of Infantry, which was destined to become one of the most heroic units of all Tar Heel troops. This company was soon on its way to Salisbury, where it guarded prisoners for a short time, and then went on to Richmond, taking a few prisoners along. General George B. McClellan having failed in the late spring and early summer to capture Richmond, the Confederate capital was now free from any immediate danger. Here the Fifty Seventh entered a camp for training and instruction until early November, when it was transferred to the main Confederate army on the Rapidan River, in Northern Virginia.

In early December the bloody Battle of Fredericksburg took place and here the Fifty Seventh did its first fighting. It went through the baptism of fire in heroic fashion, losing in killed and wounded 250 men. It went into winter quarters at Port Royal, below Fredericksburg. From April 22nd to May 11, 1863 Philip Augustus was at his home on sick leave and thus missed the great Confederate victory at Chancellorsville in early May. The next month General Lee was on his way to carry the war into the North, ending in the Battle of Gettysburg, from July 1st through the 3rd. The Fifty Seventh was part of General Jubal Early's Division, in General Richard S. Ewell's

Corps, which on its way northward had fought the Battle of Winchester, where the Confederates captured General R. H. Milroy's whole army. Then the Fifty Seventh with Early crossed the Potomac River into Maryland and marched on into Pennsylvania as far as York, before being recalled to join the other Confederate armies, which were now in southern Pennsylvania. On July 1st the Fifty Seventh was part of Early's army, which drove the Federals through the streets of Gettysburg and encamped on the other side. The next day they charged up Cemetery Ridge and reached the top, but being unsupported they retreated and left the Federals to fortify the hill, which on July 3rd the Confederates under Pickett unsuccessfully attempted to take. The Fifty Seventh after the second day was not actively in the fight. They were in the rear as Lee retreated back into Virginia.

Taking up a position on the Rapidan, the Fifty Seventh later moved downstream to the Rappahannock and took part in the disastrous fight at the Rappahannock Bridge, in November, 1863, losing in killed and captured nearly all its men who were not in hospitals or on special duty elsewhere. Its ranks having been recruited, it was sent in December into Eastern North Carolina, but it is possible that Coulter was on detached service and did not go, for on December 6th he wrote to his wife from the camp at Raccoon Ford, on the Rapidan, complaining of the cold weather and hoping that he might be able to be at home by Christmas. Whether or not he went along on the expedition into Eastern North Carolina, the Fifty Seventh was soon back into Northern Virginia to join Lee, who early in May (1864) was engaged in battles against General Ulysses S. Grant in the Wilderness and at Spotsylvania Courthouse.

On the 22nd of May Philip Augustus was captured near Milford Station and sent to Point Lookout Prison, below Washington, on the point of land between the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay, a low, swampy, unhealthy region. He remained there until October 30th, when he was exchanged. He was never afterwards able to clear his mind of the memory of the filthy conditions he underwent at Point Lookout. His stay in prison so undermined his health that soon after his exchange he was granted sick leave to recuperate at home. His Cousin J. E. Rhyne wrote in early January, 1865: "I heard a few days ago you had got home from your Kingdom. I heard you was sick but I did not learn your disease. I should like to know how the yanks treated you and where they kept you during your confinement."

While Philip Augustus was in prison, General Early with the Fifty Seventh along, in early July, 1864, made his famous raid to the



very outskirts of Washington. When Coulter returned to the war, General Lee's army was spread out in the defense of Richmond and Petersburg to the southward. But the days of the Confederacy were now numbered in figures so large that all who would could see. On April 3rd Richmond was given up, and six days later Lee surrendered his whole army to Grant at Appomattox Courthouse. But Philip Augustus Coulter was not one who was surrendered, for according to one record he was captured at Richmond on the 3rd, but another lists him as having been captured on April 6th at Farmville, a town between Richmond and Appomattox.

He was held a prisoner until June 14th, when he took the oath of allegiance at City Point, Virginia. He was now free to return home. What method he used in reaching there is not known; but that summer he walked the last mile down the red dirt road to his home. His young son, John Ellis, now a little more than four years old, contended for the rest of his life that he clearly remembered seeing his father walking down that road, at last home from the wars.

Philip Augustus Coulter was described by those who administered to him the oath of allegiance, as having dark complexion, dark hair, blue eyes, and being 5 feet and 9 inches tall. If not throughout the war, at least in the latter part, he had been assigned to the wagon train as a teamster.

Philip Augustus was a farmer, as had been his father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather (all the generations of his ancestors in America). They had found a market for their products and a source of those few supplies which they could not produce at home, by joining up with their neighbors in wagon trains and driving to Fayetteville or Columbia or Charleston. Philip Augustus had gone on one of these trips to Charleston, and in South Carolina he had seen aspects of the slave system which he did not like.

With the war over, he continued to be a farmer, but now there was no necessity to drive all the way to Charleston to market. The Western North Carolina Railroad had been completed through Catawba County and on westward into Burke by the time war had broken out; and now there was no need to drive more than three or four miles to Newton to market. In 1869 he added a little more than four acres to his farm, buying it on the South Fork River from Logan Conrad, and paying \$200 for it. Three years later he bought from Conrad 28 acres in the same region, paying \$100 for it; and in 1885 he bought another acre from Conrad, for which he paid \$14.45. He always kept considerable livestock, and in 1889 he was Director of the Sheep and Swine Department of the Catawba Agricultural and Industrial Association Fair held in Newton.

Philip Augustus Coulter had no political ambitions and played no conspicuous part in politics, but he was a staunch Democrat, at least so after the War. He may have been of Whig ancestry, for his oldest brother, Eli Summey, was a Whig until that party disintegrated in the 1850's. But, of course, during the Reconstruction and afterwards it would have been unthinkable for him to join with the scalawags, carpetbaggers, and Negroes in supporting the Radical Republicans. In line with most respectable people of his county and state, he strongly opposed the Radical Reconstructionists, who had got control after the War; and when the Ku Klux Klan was organized in the state he joined it. However, he was never active in it, and never went on a "ride." But when the Federal government attempted to break up that organization by arresting everyone suspected of being a member, Philip Augustus was indicted and arrested in 1871. In 1872 he with many others was taken to Statesville to be tried in the Federal court sitting there. He was not convicted; but he was highly incensed by being confronted by a jury with Negroes on it—and he never forgot to tell with indignation of how one of the Negro jurors leaned forward and asked, "Wus you eber on a wide [ride]?"

Philip Augustus was a Lutheran and with his family he attended St. Pauls Church, which had been organized before the Revolution and was first called the "Dutch Meeting House"—its "Dutch" character being well attested long afterwards by the German inscriptions on its early gravestones. This church building was used alternately by the Lutherans and by the German Reformed faith—branches of the Coulter family being members of both of these denominations, as previously mentioned.

In his older age Philip Augustus enjoyed his pipe of tobacco and the company of his loyal little feist dog named "Snap." He did some reading in his leisure time: the *Peerless Bible* (for which he paid \$7.00), *World Wonders*; various other books, and especially a half dozen newspapers of the day. Among these papers first came the *Newton Enterprise* (edited by George A. Warlick in the 1880's), and then such other papers as the *Raleigh Observer* (after 1880, the *News and Observer*), the *North Carolina Farmer* (Raleigh), sometimes the *Statesville Landmark*, and in the 1890's the *New York World*.

The Coulters were a fairly long-lived people. Martin, the Pioneer, who died in 1808, was probably in his middle or late seventies; his son Philip was 77, and his son Daniel was 75. Philip Augustus was never very robust after his war experiences, in prison and out, and he died on January 17, 1903, being five months beyond his 68th birthday. He was buried in the old churchyard of St. Pauls, between Startown and Conover. His wife Mary Elvira lived for almost a

quarter century thereafter as a widow, dying on February 2, 1925, being slightly over 91. She was buried in St. Pauls Churchyard.

Through inheritance and purchase, John Ellis came into possession of about 79 acres of the estate, including the original old log house erected by his great-grandfather Philip, and the additions made by subsequent generations. His brother Claud received 49 acres of the estate, which added to his other holdings constituted his home place where he lived at the time of his death in 1936.



## CHAPTER II

### YOUTH AND MARRIAGE

JOHN Ellis Coulter, with his sister Katie and his three brothers, Claud, Frank, and Phil ("Ton"), grew up on his father's farm, the boys doing the customary work outdoors and Katie helping her mother in the house. Among the very early activities of John Ellis was to plant between the house and the barn a holly tree that grew up as he did and continued to grow and live after the whole family had passed on—and was still thriving in 1962. In it the guineas and chickens soon found a place to roost. Below the barn Philip Augustus built a fish pond, fed by a small stream, and here the children tried their luck at catching the German carp which swam provokingly around, kicking up little waves, but refusing most of the time to be caught. For water in the home there was a well, but also there was a spring at the foot of the hill near where the river bottom began. The task fell to the boys to fetch water now and then and also the butter and milk which were cooled in the spring box kept filled by the water as it ran away.

At certain times there was a school held in the neighborhood, which lasted only two or three months during the year. John Ellis always remembered with great affection his teacher W. L. ("Billy") Killian, who taught at one time or another at the Quince Wilfong Schoolhouse and at the Eli Rhyne Schoolhouse. John Ellis remembered also with equal affection his schoolmates and never failed to note in after life that "so-and-so" was his old schoolmate, when such a name was mentioned. Webster's "Blue Back Speller" was the old stand-by, but there were also readers (the Sanders' New Series) and arithmetics (Sanford's).

John Ellis had a retentive mind and he crammed it with poems of heroism and patriotism, which he could recite without a hitch even



after he was more than eighty years old. A special favorite was "Hohenlinden," by Thomas Campbell, consisting of eight stanzas:

On Linden, when the sun was low,  
All bloodless lay the untrodden snow,  
And dark as winter was the flow  
Of Iser, rolling rapidly.

But Linden saw another sight,  
When the drum beat at dead of night,  
Commanding fires of death to light  
The darkness of her scenery.

\* \* \* \* \*

The combat deepens. On, ye brave,  
Who rush to glory, or the grave!  
Wave, Munich! all thy banners wave!  
And charge with all thy chivalry!

Few, few, shall part where many meet!  
The snow shall be their winding sheet,  
And every turf beneath their feet  
Shall be a soldier's sepulchre.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rhime of the Ancient Mariner" was another of John Ellis' favorites, though he did not memorize all the 143 stanzas and probably had little understanding of what the poem was supposed to mean—even as the wisest yet may not be in agreement. John Ellis memorized stanzas for their imagery and he especially liked the albatross, which his teacher (who lived far from the sea and its terms) allowed his pupil to pronounce with the accent on the second syllable. These stanzas stuck in his mind to the end:

It is an ancient Mariner,  
And he stoppeth one of three.  
"By thy long gray beard and glittering eye,  
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?"

\* \* \* \* \*

"The sun came up upon the left,  
Out of the sea came he!  
And he shone bright, and on the right  
Went down into the sea.

"At length did cross an Albatross:  
Through the fog it came:  
As if it had been a Christian soul,  
We hail'd it in God's name.

\* \* \* \* \*

Water, water, everywhere,  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink.

\* \* \* \* \*

"God save thee, ancient Mariner!  
From the friends, that plague thee thus!—  
Why look'st thou so?"—"With cross-bow  
I shot the Albatross!"

One poem, all of which John Ellis learned never to forget, was entirely out of keeping with the spirit of the good Southerner that he was. It was entitled "The Volunteers," and since it was a good rhyming poem with a good moral and was in Sanders' Second Reader (*The School Reader. Second Book*) he memorized it. It was in fact an attack on the United States for fighting the Mexican War, portraying the Abolitionists' point of view. There were nine stanzas. These are samples:

"Father, I've seen the volunteers  
Dressed out in red and blue;  
And I should like to have you tell  
What they intend to do!

"They are our country's soldiers, boy;  
And they intend to go  
To fight their country's battles,  
Away in Mexico!

And the conversation continues between the father and son in which the son wants to know what the war is all about and fears that people will get killed. The father says that Mexicans deserve to be killed and that their towns should be burned down because the Mexicans

owed the United States money which they refused to pay. The son now gets a bright idea:

Well; Peter Jones is owing me  
A sixpence for a knife;  
I'll go some night and burn him out,  
And take the fellow's life.

"What, Take his life? What do you mean?  
That would be very wrong;  
You would be tried for murder, boy,  
And on the gallows hung!

"Then why not hang the volunteers?  
Is it more wicked, then,  
To shoot and kill a single boy,  
Than kill a thousand men?"

John Ellis had an unusual amount of ambition for a country boy living three or four miles from a town of any size—Newton; Startown was much nearer (on the way to Newton) but there was nothing there except a post office, a store, and a few residences. There was very little ready money to be made on a farm, especially for a boy in his 'teens, who had no special claim on the income, except for his upkeep. He could make some spending money by cutting and selling cordwood, but he soon learned that he could make more money by taking this same cordwood and burning it into charcoal and then selling the charcoal for five cents a bushel. A person burning charcoal had to be very careful not to let too much air into the mound of smouldering timber covered over with earth, else instead of charcoal there would result a nice mound of fine ashes, which no one would buy.

Farming was not detested by John Ellis (he would always be interested in a certain amount of it), but it was not a sufficient objective for his ambitions. Primarily he had his sights set on becoming a business man. Just what his business would be, time would have to tell. Institutions called business colleges were springing up widely over the country—some called themselves commercial colleges; but their chief interest seemed to be in teaching penmanship. They emphasized that a good handwriting was necessary for any businessman, and if a person entered a business not as owner, part-owner, but merely as a secretary, then, indeed, he must have an attractive handwriting. These were the days before the coming of the typewriter,



which led people to quit writing with their hands and made handwriting practically a lost art. At this time the fine Spencerian script was the accepted form, and there were certain institutions and even individuals designed to teach only handwriting in what were called "Writing Schools."

John Ellis corresponded with several of these institutions and individuals. There was "The Commercial (or Business) College of the Ky. University" at Lexington; the Eastman National Business College at Poughkeepsie, New York; and the Jersey City Business College at Jersey City, New Jersey, which got out a publication called *The Penman's Gazette*. These institutions all were soliciting John Ellis' attendance, except the last-named, which taught its students by the correspondence method. It offered Gaskell's *Complete Compendium*, consisting of various lessons and exercises in penmanship—all for \$1.00. Then, there were individuals without any organization, who offered to appear wherever sufficient interest was shown, and there organize a writing school, while others required attendance at their fixed locations. There was E. W. Scott in Monroe, who would like to have students enroll there; L. F. Shufford of Happy Home (later Connelly Springs), who was willing to come and set up a writing school at an opportune time; and a Mr. Hinson of Rutherford College seems to have been a writing schoolmaster, who was willing to sell John Ellis gold ink "at the regular price."

It is not known just where or under whose tutelage John Ellis took his writing lessons, but in 1880 he was busily limbering his wrist in various curlicues and shadings of script—of course, all Spencerian, the famous penmanship script devised by Platt Rogers Spencer (1800-1864), the well known calligrapher of New York. At this time John Ellis seems to have had in mind becoming secretary of some business firm somewhere. He developed a beautiful handwriting which was the admiration of his associates and acquaintances and not until he reached his eighties did his hand begin to tremble and waver.

Some of his training in penmanship as well as in composition he got through a long and interesting correspondence with his cousin Emma Hildebrand of Paris, Texas. His Aunt Eliza, his father's sister, had married Israel Hildebrand and they had migrated to Texas, as heretofore stated. Emma was greatly interested in her kindred back in North Carolina and she and her "Cousin John" got up a correspondence in early 1880 which lasted until the middle of 1882, soon after which time he became married; and thereafter he developed interests too numerous to allow a continuance of the correspondence, though he always held in grateful remembrance his "Cousin Emma." John Ellis carefully saved all (or apparently all) the letters he re-

ceived; but unfortunately those which he wrote have long since disappeared. Educated people of those days got some of their most satisfactory entertainment out of corresponding, especially with their kinfolks, but also with just friends and acquaintances. That sort of entertainment in writing and receiving letters was almost completely banished by twentieth century automobiles, radios, movies, television, and other conveniences and empty pastimes, leaving many people poorer in the keener sense of values and sensitive natures.

Emma had a strong personality, an affectionate feeling for people, a love of reading and learning, with a sprightly style of writing, and withal a teasing good-natured frivolity. She had returned once or twice to visit her kindred in North Carolina, apparently when she was quite young: "I can remember the last time I was in Newton, how I liked to stay at Uncle Philip's, how we used to go in the orchard and eat and gather apples and plums. How we used to wade in the branch. Do you remember those happy days? I wish I could go back to N. C. once more to see you all; I would like to see you all so much." Again she wrote that she always remembered the weeks she spent at her Uncle Philip's "as the most pleasant of my life. We had so many nice plums and fruit of all kinds, but strange to say I don't remember very much about you."

John Ellis, apparently about this time, had serious thoughts about beginning his career in Texas, and may have started the correspondence with his Cousin Emma by writing her to find out what conditions were like out there. In March, 1880 she wrote, "Dear cousin, you asked me to advise you whether it would be best to stay at home, or come out here. Dear cousin, I would be glad for you to come out here; but I must tell you, this is a rather hard country. Unless you have capital to go into some kind of business, you have to work very hard. . . . Labor is very cheap; a great many are going from here to Colorado to the gold mines." Her brother Wallace was working on a farm for \$15.00 a month. Cousin John had apparently suggested that he might want to go out there as a clerk, and Cousin Emma wanted to know what kind of clerk he wanted to be. But she was not trying to scare him away, for a little later she wanted to know, "When are you coming to Texas? Papa told me to tell you that you must not expect to find money growing on trees. But I think Texas a good country for anybody who is willing to work. And I know you are not lazy." A year later she was more insistent: "Cousin John, I just want you to fix yourself for a migration next fall, and come to Tex. If you like farming Tex. is the country, or anything you like." That year (1881) her brother made ten bales of cotton on fifteen acres.



Cousin Emma was busy going to school--"am trying to prepare myself for a teacher. I glory in being independent as much as one can. When I get rich teaching, I will come back and pay you a visit." The final examinations were a sort of commencement and lasted three days with great crowds of people attending. There were compositions and orations. "I did very well, a great deal better than I expected to do. We all had to have original compositions, my subject was 'All the World's a Stage,' and read them before a crowded house." With school out in 1880, "I am thinking of going to school again next year. I am going to make a 'school marm' of myself. What business do you follow? for of course you follow some kind." Her Cousin John must have told her that he was going to writing school, for Cousin Emma remarked, "I would like to learn the muscular movement very much myself but there is no teacher here." Emma wrote a very clear hand, as it was. Back in school that fall, she wrote, "I finished Geometry & Trigonometry last week; what do you think of that?" There was fun as well as work in school: "Cousin John, are you going to send me an April-fool? Last April we all ran off and went fishing, but I don't guess we will do that way Friday." The teacher promised them that if they did not run away on April the first, he would give them a day off in May to go fishing, "which will be a great deal nicer." It was now June, 1881 and school would soon be out: "We will not have much of an examination on account of our new building not yet being completed. It is a handsome house; I wish you could see it. It has a tower on each corner and also one in front in the center; this one will be four stories high while the corner ones are three."

With school out what would Cousin Emma do now? "I have been wanting to go somewhere on a visit this vacation but haven't any where to go; don't you feel sorry for me?" As a matter of fact, no Texan ever failed to have a place to go. Living in the biggest state in the Union, Texans could choose any kind of place to go to and still be within their state. So Cousin Emma decided to spend two weeks in the country, where she "had a splendid time with the country boys. Had quite a catastrophe to befall me by falling off a trotting horse (the saddle turned). I had a young lady behind me; of course she fell too. We had gone black-berrying and failed to find any, so of course *we had* to do something to create a sensation. We never went any where though, but what something happened to us."

In a state as large as Texas there had to be all sorts of weather, and whatever the weather was it would likely go to greater lengths than weather in any other state. "It is getting real warm here," Cousin Emma wrote in July. "I like winter better than summer don't you?"

Paris is tolerably dry in summer." "Do you have anything like rain in Newton?" she asked. "We have not had a storm this summer. Paris is all dust. We can scarcely get any vegetables at all, everything dried up. We have plenty of ice cream though." But in the winter there was a different kind of weather to write about. In January she wrote, "We have had beautiful weather all winter until within the last week, it has been raining regular. We haven't had a bit of snow so far, have you? You never will know how to appreciate wind until you come to Texas and experience one of our 'Northers,' you will think then that you had never felt any wind before. And you don't know what a level plain is, except by hearsay, until you have seen the prairies of Texas."

As was the custom in those days, kinfolks as well as just friends and acquaintances did a lot of exchanging pictures. Very soon Cousin Emma and Cousin John had exchanged pictures, and Emma remarked, "I had a plume in my hair, which don't take well, and it spoilt the expressions of my face." In describing herself beyond what the picture showed, she said, "I weight 124 lbs and 5 ft-8 in. in height, what do you think of that." Cousin Emma might have added that those proportions were normal for real Texans, whether male or female. If Cousin John should come to Texas, he certainly would have to visit his kin in Paris. "Do you like poor folks, for we are as poor as 'Job's Turkey.' You won't see much I must tell you, when you see me. I am one of these kind of people who are poor but hold their heads high. I always go in the very best of society and have a good many influential friends." In referring to feminine society, she remarked, "I must tell you, there are very few pretty girls out here . . . but my motto is 'Pretty is as pretty *does*.' Looking at things in that light, we have a great many pretty girls in Paris."

Cousin John's picture must have been rather striking: "There was a young lady at my house the other day who wished to borrow your picture to fool some young men with; of course I let her have it. Now don't you feel yourself highly complimented, having young ladies borrowing your picture. I won't tell you all the compliments they pass on you; it would make you vain." She wrote that her mother "says to tell you, that she never saw an ugly *Coulter*, but I must not tell you what every body says, for fear of making you vain. Hurry and get ready to come out here as I want to *see* you real bad. Mama says she is afraid I am falling in love with you. Isn't that a good joke on me? Mama thinks I have to love every body that I admire. I like all the boys but never have seen one yet that I loved; I don't know what love is yet. You said that I must be a 'Fortune Teller,' no I am not, but I am a pretty good judge of



character. You were afraid to venture upon a description of myself."

But Cousin Emma was not afraid to venture, in her imagination, a description of Cousin John: "I imagine you to have brown eyes, real pretty ones, brown hair, tolerably fair complexion, height 6 ft five inches (I bet I am taller than you are [some of Cousin Emma's bantering, as she had not yet described herself], tolerably heavy set; I won't try to guess your weight correctly, for I am not good at guessing pounds; but let us say, about a hundred and forty or sixty. You are a good sober young man, neither drink, gamble nor use bad language, love to go with the girls and have fun with them. In fact, just such a young man that I like. Oh yes, I forgot to tell you one thing; you are not stingy. I mean not so stingy that you won't take the girls to any thing they would like to go to. I don't like to see any body too free or too stingy." Later she added, "You neither drink, chew, nor smoke I know. I don't mind young men smoking, but I *do detest chewing & drinking*." She wrote in January, 1882, "Paris succeeded in getting all her saloons closed this year. And I hope they will stay closed."

Cousin Emma liked to put on a half-teasing, half-conscious attitude in her letter writing; though properly sentimental she was not going to be swept off her feet under any circumstances. "I have an idea of living an old maid; all my friends say they know I will be one anyway." Two years later she wrote, "I am going to live an old maid and spend all the money I make traveling." Teasingly again she wrote, "I would send you a picture of my fellow if I had one, but the boys don't like me; consequently I haven't any fellows." But apparently she did have fellows, anytime she wanted them, as these remarks would indicate: "Well, I believe Barnum's big show has been in Paris since I wrote to you last. My stingy fellow took me. I won't tell any bad tales on him, but *he is* awful stingy; he thought he was doing me a downright to take me, — perhaps he was. Any way I was nearly dead to go. There are to be several theatre troupes here next week (Paris has a splendid Opera house)." "I was at a little sociable night before last, one of my old-time beaus escorted me there and back; he said he loved me as much as ever; but I don't love him, so what am I to do?"

It is evident that Cousin Emma was not a giddy, giggling, girl. Apparently she belonged to no church, but she went to Sunday school, and preferred the Baptist because she liked immersion. In April, 1882 she wrote, "The Methodists of Paris have been carrying on a big meeting for five weeks and still I am a sinner." This same year she commented on the hard times: "Times are very dull at present. Last year was considered a hard year on the farmers; nothing



did much good except cotton; corn was a perfect failure. So was fruit of all kinds." In the election of 1880 Winfield S. Hancock and William H. English were running for the presidency and vice presidency respectively on the Democratic ticket and Texas voted overwhelmingly for them, though they lost the election. Paris was duly excited and Cousin Emma was too: "Well, we have the Hancock and English flag floating over our town still, but will have to take it down I am afraid. We had one jolly night any way though. The city was illuminated and we had speeches and a torch light procession; everything looked grand I can tell you."

Cousin Emma was quite bookish or literary: "We organized our Reading Club again last night. I am Secretary." She wanted her Cousin John to send her "anything pretty to read." And she wanted to know, "What kind of literature are you fond of reading? Novels? Poetry or Prose? Don't you think the 'Hermit' by Goldsmith is pretty?" Again, "Have you anything good to read? Have you ever read Mark Twain's 'Innocents Abroad'; it is splendid, extremely funny sometimes. I haven't read a good novel lately. I have been trying to read some of Charles Dickens' but I don't admire those I have, much. Have you read 'St. Elmo,' that is good." At one of the meetings of the Reading Club she read "'Darkness' by Byron. . . . We are allowed to select any thing we please." Santa Claus seemed to know what she liked: "I received several books Christmas on the tree. One was 'Owen Meredith's Poems.' Did you ever read Lucile, written by him; I think it is perfectly beautiful."

Texans at this time and later liked to think of themselves as a bit different, more self-reliant, more sure of themselves, than the common run. Cousin Emma was a good Texan: "Cousin, what do the girls in your neighborhood do to make money or do any of them try? I am an independent kind of a creature, love to ask nobody any odds, and so I love to make my own money. I am going to be a teacher and an old maid! Not a mean but a *good one*." She kept in mind her gradual approach to both. In 1881 she wrote, "Dear cousin, I expect I will be quite an old maid next year when I go to teaching. Are you coming to Texas this fall? I bet you never do come. No, *I don't bet*, but anyway I bet you don't come." As a matter of fact, Cousin Emma did not wait until "next year" to begin her teaching career, for in early December of 1881 she wrote, "Well I must tell you I have been teaching for two months; I am assisting in the 'Aiken Institute,' the largest school in Paris. We have about two hundred pupils, and a handsome new school house in which to teach. I have been fussing all day today, I just know boys are the meanest things imaginable—and the sweetest too!—there are three or four boys in my classes

that worry me nearly to death. I feel like I am getting old and wrinkled with scolding so much."

And here Cousin Emma is left teaching. Did she become an old maid? The correspondence with her Cousin John runs out here—if there was more it has not resisted the ravages of time, mice, and silverfish. It would be intriguing to know what happened to the wholly admirable Emma Hildebrand. All efforts to find out have been of no avail. But one may suspect tragedy—an early death, perhaps? For her mother wrote to her Nephew John in 1893 in answer to a letter from him, that she was glad he "had not forgot us. I shed tears over your letter with joye. I remember Dear Emma long ago corresponded with you and loved to get your letters, but how things have changed." All her children had scattered: Willie and Wallace were living in West Texas, in Wilbarger and Donley counties respectively, and Nannie was living in San Francisco. No further mention of Emma.

John Ellis was during these days not only writing long letters to his Cousin Emma, but he was also writing many shorter ones to the young ladies of Catawba County, who were not his cousins, putting into practice that same fine Spencerian script. "Compliments of J. E. Coulter to Miss Katie Cline respectfully soliciting the pleasure of her company this eve." "Katie Cline returns compliments to Mr. J. E. Coulter and will accept his company this eve." And the same to Sallie Cline, and "Sallie Cline returns compliments to Mr. Coulter and will be pleased to have his company Saturday eve." And "A. L. Rhyne returns compliments to Mr. J. E. Coulter and will with pleasure accept his company to church." And "Compliments of A. L. Blackburn to Mr. J. E. Coulter and will be pleased with his company Saturday eve at 7 Oclock." And compliments of J. E. Coulter to Dora E. Miller and to Lizzie Smyre and so on, and their compliments and pleasures returned. And then there was J. E. Coulter's compliments to Lucy Ann Propst (September 21, 1862-May 5, 1952) and the answer: "L. A. Propst returns compliments to Mr. J. E. Coulter and accepts his company with pleasure." And more compliments of John Ellis to Lucy Ann and her compliments and pleasures in return.

Soon these compliments and pleasure notes were to come to an end, and this document was recorded in the family archives: "This is to Certify that John Ellis Coulter and Lucy Ann Propst were united by me in Holy Matrimony at the Home of Julia A. Huit [Huitt] on the tenth day of August in the Year of our Lord, 1882 in the Presence of Jacob Y. Propst and Sidney Propst. Signed Reverend R. A. Yoder, Pastor E.[vangelical] L.[utheran] Church."



Lucy Ann Propst was the daughter of Julia Ann Propst and her husband David Franklin Propst. Lucy Ann's father had on July 4, 1862 enlisted in the Fifty-Seventh Regiment, North Carolina Infantry (interestingly enough the same regiment in which John Ellis' father had enlisted), and had died in camp. Since his daughter Lucy Ann was born the following September 21st, she never saw her father and he never saw his little daughter. Some years later her mother married Moses Huitt, a widower, who had died by the time of Lucy Ann's marriage. Julia Ann had been a Smyre before her first marriage. She was born October 14, 1829 and died May 1, 1920, being almost ninety years old.

Lucy Ann had grown up in the Saint James community, near Newton, in the midst of a large family of children, sisters and brothers, step-sisters and step-brothers, and a half-sister. Her full sisters and brother were Martha, Jane (March 14, 1859-September 22, 1890), and Sidney (October 4, 1860-October 26, 1941). (Martha, born March 27, 1852, died April 18, 1948; married Jerome Bolick; children: James F., Virtna [Mrs. Francis E. Mennen], D. Edgar, M. Loy, Nona [Mrs. Lignell W. Hood], Perley Jerome, Rolland K., Oscar W., Mabel [Mrs. Joel S. Williams], Cora [Mrs. Lewis S. Setzer], Walther T., and Stella). Her step-brothers and sisters numbered more than a half dozen, but Lizzie became the constant playmate of Lucy Ann, who never forgot to tell about the childish activities and escapades of "me and Lizzie." These step-children were, of course, the children of Moses Huitt by his first wife. Lucy Ann's only half-sister was Cora, born to the union of Moses Huitt and his wife, Julia Ann Huitt. (Cora married Casper S. Coiner; the children were Gertrude, Myrtle, and Sophia).

After the death of her second husband, Julia Ann Huitt moved to Conover, where Lucy Ann attended Concordia College (founded in 1881), and became sufficiently interested and proficient in music to play her organ for her own amusement and for her family's entertainment in later years. When she was a girl of sixteen she had purchased this organ (made by J. O. Weaver, York, Pennsylvania), with money which she had received as an inheritance. When Lucy Ann was married, her mother gave her a milch cow, a bedstead, a washpot, and a high chest of drawers with a mirror. Ever after, even into her eighties, Lucy Ann was never content without a cow or two on the place.

### CHAPTER III

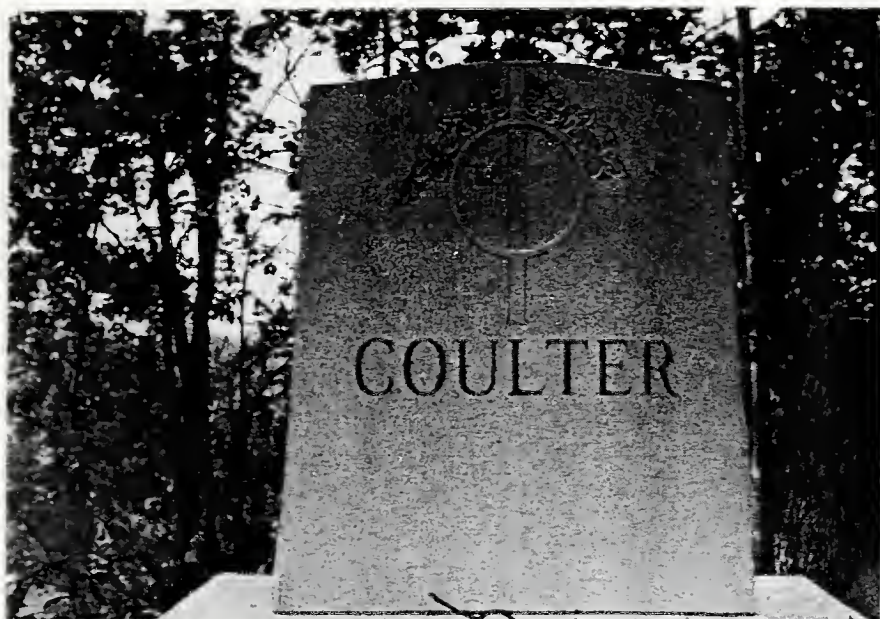
#### IN THE "NATION"—FIELD AND FOREST

TO enter immediately a business career required more capital than John Ellis could command, now that he had acquired a wife, with the additional expenses incident to a married life. If he took a honeymoon, it did not extend far. Soon he set about building a house on the ancestral estate or, perhaps, only adjoining it, and for the first year he engaged apparently with his father and brothers in farming. Servants had never been in the Coulter family tradition, and though Lucy Ann came of a family whose background had been touched lightly with the ownership of a few Negro slaves, yet she was removed as far as any Tar Heel woman could be in her attitude toward having servants in her home, whether black or white. Yet soon after her marriage she made as a part of her home an orphan, "a small girl by name M. J. Bolch," whose given name was Mintie (December 19, 1870-February 12, 1943). Mintie remained for six years in the Coulter family, more as one of the family than as a servant, and as long as she lived she was a favorite person for the Coulters to remember and visit.

In the summer of the second year (August 3, 1883), John Ellis entered into an agreement with his father to farm the old home place and each to receive one half of the crop. It was also agreed that his brothers Claud and Phil, when not going to school, would help—and also on John Ellis' part Mintie should do light work when she could be spared from the home.

Manifestly such an arrangement was only a stopgap until Coulter could hit on something better. When he was building his house, he must have sensed the possibilities that lay in the forests—lumber, shingles, laths. Here were business opportunities almost unlimited, when he noted the great virgin forests to the westward in Catawba County along Jacobs Fork with its waterpower waiting to turn the



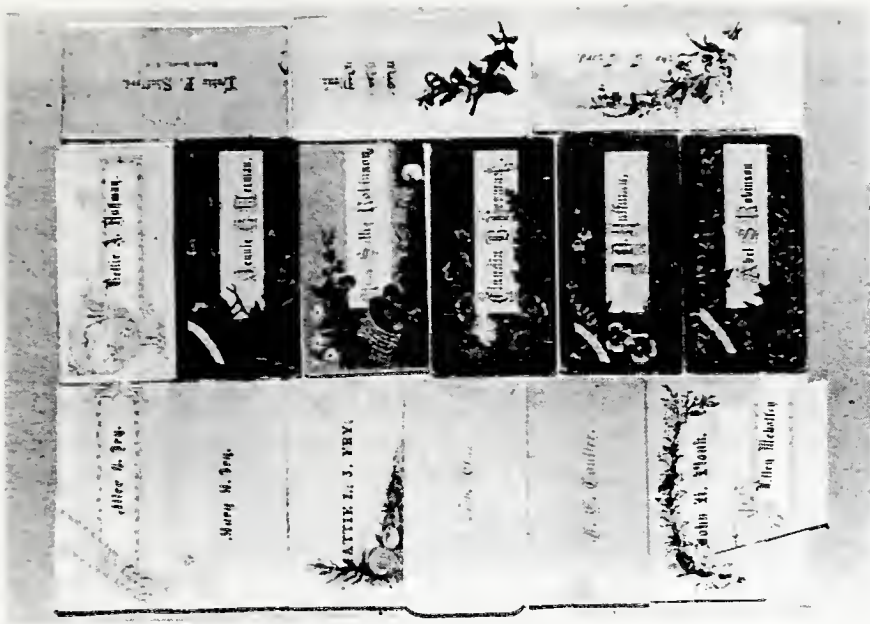
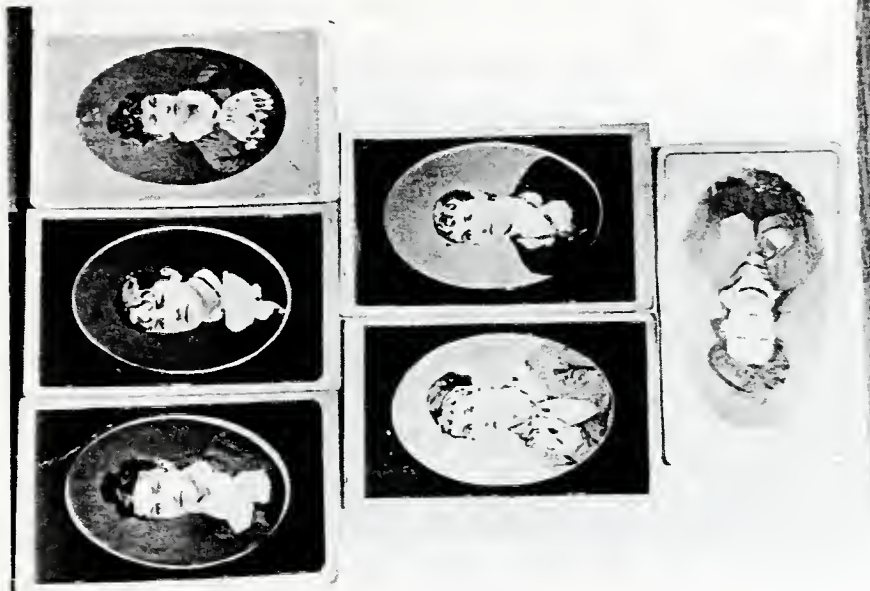


*Top:* MARKER ON OLD COULTER CEMETERY. *Bottom:* OLD COULTER CEMETERY KNOLL IN THE VALLEY OF THE SOUTH FORK RIVER.

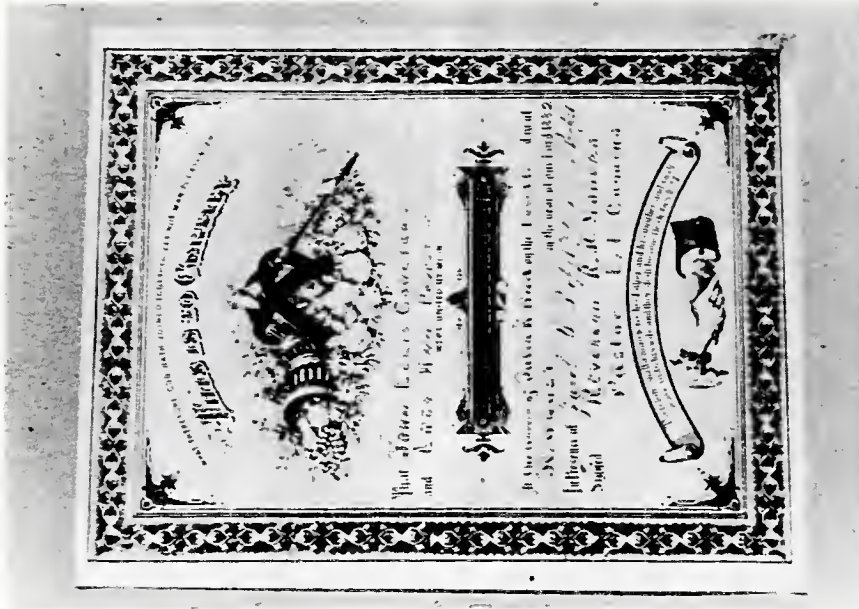


*Top:* LOG BARN NEAR THE HOUSE-SITE OF MARTIN COULTER, JR. *Bottom:* PHILIP COULTER LOG HOUSE AS IT APPEARED IN 1962.





*Left: CATAWBA COUNTY BELLES OF THE 1880'S. Right: CALLING CARDS OF THE 1880'S.*



*Left: COUSIN EMMA HILDEBRAND. Right: COULTER'S MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE.*



machinery of sawmills and the burrstones of gristmills. As the crows fly (assuming that they fly a beeline, a very bold and, in fact, incorrect assumption) it was only a half dozen miles to this promised land; but by the meandering country roads the distance was little less than a dozen miles. This region lay in Bandys Township, which the Coulters affectionately dubbed the "Nation." It bordered on Burke County, and much of the great forests extended into Lower Fork Township in this country. Bandys joined Jacobs Fork Township on the east, which had been a Coulter stronghold for more than a century.

On February 14, 1884 the Coulter wagon train set out on its trek westward to a spot about a mile from the north bank of Jacobs Fork opposite what was known as the Tucker Shoals. It must have been a wagon train of at least more than one wagon, for household and kitchen furniture had been accumulated in the two years residence in Jacobs Fork Township. There was also one child, Alvin Augustus, born September 2nd of the previous year. Mintie was along, and someone must have led the milch cow, which Mother Huitt had given Lucy Ann, as a wedding present.

There was no railroad within ten miles, but country roads were plentiful and confusing to travelers who were strangers to the region, for no one thought it necessary to erect sign pointers. Everybody knew that one of the roads went to Hickory, about fifteen miles away, at least; another road went to Happy Home (later Connelly Springs), Burke County, about ten miles away; another road went to Morganton (county seat of Burke County), probably twenty miles away; and there were various other roads which went to Conover, Newton, Maiden, Shelby, and Lincolnton. All of these towns were on railroads, either the Western North Carolina (later Richmond & Danville, and finally the Southern) or the Carolina and Northwestern (later absorbed by the Southern). The road to Morganton crossed Henrys Fork near where Laurel Creek entered it. The Laurel Road was well famed for the frequency with which it crossed the Creek and for the absence of any houses which made it, indeed, "a lonesome road," to travel.

Coulter's post office address was Mull Grove, but he also received mail at one time or another at Henry (in Lincoln County), Chestnut (in Burke), and at Connelly Springs (before he finally moved there).

Less than a week before moving to the "Nation," Coulter bought from George W. Chapman for \$1,200 (February 9, 1884) a tract of land containing 169 acres on which there was a substantial two-story house. Into this house the Coulters moved and continued there as long as they lived in the "Nation." Apparently Coulter paid cash for this property, excepting \$400, for which he gave Chapman two

notes of \$200 each, one falling due February 15, 1886 and the other a year later. He cleared all this indebtedness by January 5, 1888.

Important as it was to have a place in which to live, it was equally important to have a place wherein a living could be made. To secure power for his lumbering business, on February 28th Coulter bought from Samuel and Lucinda Tucker, his wife, three acres surrounding the shoals on Jacobs Fork, paying them \$600 for it. Here a dam was built and power secured for Coulter's several mills which he erected. A few years later (May 28, 1888) he secured from Lucinda Tucker (now a widow) the right to use a small tract of land as a log yard "or any other purpose he may desire" (for instance stacking lumber and shingles). For the use of this land he paid Lucinda 75 cents annually as long as he should desire this use.

A favorite expression of Coulter's was, "There is no more land being made." Acting on this aphorism he proceeded to acquire more land not only here in the "Nation," but even more actively when he moved to Connelly Springs. On July 4, 1888 he bought 25 acres from George W. Wilson for \$3.00 an acre. At other times he bought land on both sides of Jacobs Fork, and by 1891 he owned in Lower Fork Township in Burke County (only a half mile to the westward) 149 acres on Camp Creek, 85 acres on Douglass Creek, and 115 acres elsewhere.

Coulter wasted no time in erecting his mills and preparing to market his timber products. Most of his mill machinery was under one roof on the north side of the river. There were a sawmill, a shingle machine, a planer for dressing lumber, and other necessary equipment. There was also a gristmill, designed principally for grinding corn meal by means, of course, of millstones or burrstones; but the mill also ground wheat for bread. Roller mills and their so-called "patent flour" were not yet heard of.

The water power of the river could be harnessed through either an overshot wheel or turbine. A steel overshot wheel twelve feet in diameter would cost about \$100. One made of wood was cheaper, but it would not remain in balance if allowed to rest when not in use, since it would become waterlogged and consequently heavier in the lower part, which remained in the water. To prevent this defect, it could be kept running slowly all the time. Coulter decided on a turbine wheel, which he bought from A. W. Haag & Company of Fleetwood, Pennsylvania, who were dealers in "Reliance Turbine Water Wheels and Mill Gearing." He paid \$216 for the wheel, and \$58.57 for equipment—bevel wheels, shaft, flanges, and gate fixtures. He was getting other machinery from various suppliers. Making shingles one of his major operations, less than two weeks after he arrived in the "Nation," he was buying a shingle machine for \$240



through the agency of Horace W. Connelly & Co. of Happy Home, who were deep in the lumber and shingle business at that point. Then for transferring power to the machinery, belting was being sought and secured—gum belting as well as leather. By the end of April, 1884, Coulter was about ready to begin operations. In ordering belting at that time from New York, he added, "Please ship at once as I am standing still."

In entering into the lumber and shingle business and the manufacture of other timber products, Coulter began equipping himself with various aids—publications which would keep him abreast of the times, and handy calculators. He subscribed for the *Tradesman, A Southern Trade Journal Devoted to Manufacturing, Mining, Mercantile and Industrial Pursuits*, a semi-monthly published in Chattanooga; also Rand, McNally & Co.'s *Record of Lumber Mills and Lumber Dealers, United States and Canada*. An especially handy device which he bought was *Scribner's Lumber & Log Book; For Ship and Boat Builders, Lumber Merchants, Saw-Mill Men, Farmers and Mechanics*. . . . It was written by J. M. Scribner and published in Rochester, New York in 1882 in a revised and illustrated edition. It was a ready calculator for measuring lumber of all lengths, widths, and thicknesses and a compilation of useful information relative to lumber, logs, and timber.

Now for the buzzing noise of machinery in action, punctuated by the long whines of the saw as it cut off lumber from the logs, and the short whines of the shingle saw in quick succession as it cut the shingle blocks into wide slabs ready to be trimmed into three inch and four inch widths. The first and last (outside) slabs from the shingle block were called "juggles," and when split up they made good stove wood. Also over and above this din of whizzing noises, there could be heard in distinct over-tones the rhythmic rumbling of the burrstones as they whirled round and round grinding corn into meal and feed-stuffs and wheat into flour.

The logs and shingle blocks came not only from Coulter's timberland but also from the landowners of the surrounding regions, who hauled them on ox carts to the log and block yard. Also Coulter had his own yokes of oxen, which hauled many logs to his mill; one of his finest oxen was drowned while fording the river at the crossing just below the milldam. Logs and shingle blocks were also floated down the river and fished out at the obstruction above the dam. On one occasion, in 1888, Coulter paid Joe Friddle \$1.00 for pulling logs out.

Logs from the great yellow pines were the main supply, but there were also some of white oak, poplar, and birch. Sometimes Coulter

bought logs for as little as 32 cents apiece; also he bought them on the basis of 25 cents for 100 feet of lumber cut from them. He bought many shingle blocks, obtaining from Calvin Smith in one period 1,031 on the bank of the river, ready to be thrown in and floated to the mill. Sam Tucker, from whom Coulter had bought the shoals, cut and hauled logs until his death in March, 1888.

On June 4, 1884 Coulter wrote to his cousin O. L. Lowe: "I am now prepared to fill orders for shingles, hope you will favor me with yours. I can cut 20,000 per day. We will guarantee shingles to be all yellow heart-pine and to hold out in number at the following prices 4 in. gaged at the mill \$2.15" per thousand and in other specifications at lower prices. Shingles were packed in bales of 250. Ten days later Coulter leased for six months to L. M. (Mon) Williams a fourth interest in his shingle machine for 10 cents a thousand shingles. Probably this was a round-about way of securing the services of Williams without paying him a salary. Soon Coulter was selling shingles far and wide: to Philadelphia, Baltimore, Asheville, Greensboro, and to markets closer to home. It was a common practice for prospective customers to request samples, which Coulter would always obligingly send.

Apart from lumber and shingles, standard timber products, Coulter developed certain specialties in his wood-working operations, as announced on his letterhead: "Tobacco and Goods Boxes, . . . Lumber, Lathes, Picket Palings, Heart Sawed Pine Shingles, Dressed Flooring, Ceiling, and Weather-Boarding. Also Bevel Siding & Patent Weather-Boarding." He was soon to add egg crates. It is doubtful that he cut many laths at this time; though he had them to sell, for he bought them from suppliers. In 1892 he bought about 100,000 from R. L. (Russ, Ruff, Roof, Roff) Huffman at 90 cents and \$1.00 a thousand.

Coulter soon developed a market for lumber and shingles, also, bigger than he could supply with his own production; and as a consequence he bought much, especially shingles, from other millmen. During 1890-1892 he bought at least a half million shingles from Pink Stilwell. Other suppliers were: Andy, Mart, and Richard Young; R. L. (Bob) Asherbranner; Lewis C. (Lew) Taylor (January 8, 1847-March 16, 1920), with whom he would be dealing for many years to come; J. J. Hicks; Richard F. Stephens; James Hildebran; Alex Hudson; S. M. Wilkie; J. P. Allran; Marion Huffman; and G. W. (Wash) Pendleton. Some of these men sold Coulter both lumber and shingles.

Jacobs Fork might float logs and blocks to the mill; but Jacobs Fork could not float lumber and shingles to market. The nearest railroad town, Happy Home (Connelly Springs after 1886), was at



least ten miles away—these were the successive names of the post office, but strangely enough the railroad station was called Icard. There was a point on the railroad about two miles east of the town where the road to Hickory crossed, known as Bowman's Crossing (confusing enough, later to be called Icard when a settlement grew up there), and here was a sidetrack, which made it possible for cars to be loaded. The point was often referred to as the "Switch," and here many cars were loaded with Coulter's lumber and shingles when it was not necessary or desirable to continue to Happy Home—Connelly Springs—Icard. Occasionally he loaded some of his lumber and shingles on cars at Hickory and at least once or twice "at 62 mile siding," later to be named Hildebran. In addition to Coulter's own wagoning operations, there were others who furnished their own teams and wagons, and among them were: the Britains (Will, Wade, Jonas [March 22, 1830–November 28, 1905], and James), Anderson Hudson, Dan Johnson, and Russ Huffman. A man with his own team and wagon did hauling for \$3.50 a day. A driver for Coulter's outfit received 50 cents a day.

Though Coulter had run away from farming at his old home place back in Jacobs Fork Township, he was not going to neglect it here; for he had the habit of including in his business activities anything which he could fit into them. Of course, farming was not his main concern here, but it was important. He raised principally grain, wheat, oats, corn, and rye. Also he produced some sweet potatoes, molasses cane, and, of course, kitchen garden vegetables. In 1888 he had five acres of oats. When it was ready to harvest, he paid Abb Simpson a day's wages to hunt up the necessary hands. Grain was cut with the scythe and cradle. Cradling was back-breaking and brought \$1 a day; those who followed and bound the grain into sheaves commanded only 40 cents a day. In 1891 Russ Huffman worked seven days at 50 cents a day, making molasses.

Coulter during his stay in the "Nation," hired a couple of dozen workmen, most of whom, if not all, he always remembered with affection in later life, noting when something important happened to any of them (as their deaths) that "so-and-so" worked for him in the "Nation." When Sidney G. (Sid) Hartsoe died on February 26, 1934, Coulter noted that Sid "was the first man I ever employed," and that was in 1882, the year Coulter was married and two years before he moved over to the "Nation." Sid followed him there and this is the text of a contract made between them, for the year June 18, 1891–June 18, 1892:

"This certifies that I, S. G. Hartsoe, of the first [part] do hereby agree to work for J. E. Coulter of the 2nd part for a term of 12

months from date at 50 cts per day for all work except Harvest labor which I am to have the customary price of the country, that I will not loiter or lose time during my employment unnecessarily but will on the other hand do all work to the best of my knowledge or ability to the best interests of my employer, that I will give due notice if I want to lose a day, that I will make good all time lost wontonly or maliciously and all repairs accrued by my carelessness and neglect."

"I, J. E. Coulter, of the 2nd part do hereby agree to and accept the above, and will pay to the said S. G. Hartsoe the Harvest prices of this country for all work done in the wheat & oat crop and fifty cts per day for all other work, that I will sell him all his supplies & goods needed, at the cash price & pay ballance due him in cash, that I will charge nothing for the teams to move him, provided he complies with the contract, that I will furnish him firewood, patches, & house rent free & a horse & plow free to cultivate patches, and team free to haul up his firewood free, that I will give regular employment whenever possible. That I will pay interest from day to day of expiration of time if not paid on that day, that I will if I give party of the first part any trouble to collect amt. due, pay all cost & allso pay him 75 cts per day for all time lost in coming for his pay."

Avery Fry was another of Coulter's workmen in whom he put great trust and confidence. They remained good friends long after Fry ceased to be a workman for anyone except for himself and family—even to the time when Fry died on January 4, 1940. These are the texts of labor contracts between them in 1890, although Fry had been working for Coulter some years previously:

"This certifies that I, Avery, do agree to work for J. E. Coulter for Eleven months from Jan. 1st except when hindered by sickness or have leave of absence. That I will give several days notice when I want to loose any time. That I will see that all the stock is fed according to directions. That I will drive to the best of my ability and see that any other driver does the same & when necessary give him such assistance as may be necessary & give any instructions that I can and not abuse nor talk harsh nor abusive to him. That I will curry my team & Boy [Coulter's favorite riding horse] or any horse that may be kept in his stead. That I will not beat nor abuse any of the stock nor use any thing heavier than the lash of the whip and see that any other driver does not and if he does, promptly notify said J. E. Coulter of the same. That I will not go off the direct road nor get drunk nor under the influence of Liquor while at work. That I will not drive faster than is necessary. That I will not use any obscene nor profane language within the hearing of the house nor children.



That I will if I am the only party that has hogs in the pasture & they get out make such repairs as will keep them in or if others have any in do my proportional part. The same with the Cattle after the fence has been made. That when my time is out & if I doant hire I will give possession of the house at once. That if said J. E. Coulter complies with his contract I will in no wise leave the employ before my time expires. That I will do the above for \$13.00 per mo. of 26 days. That I will buy such goods & wares of said J. E. Coulter as I may need provided he sells as cheap as any one else. That I will board Bob & Sam Fry & Sherill. That if I brake the Buggy or any other implement while using same to my own use & convenience will pay for such repairs as will make said article as good as it formerly was. That I will use all care in driving to protect the wagon from brakage or strain possible & also notice that any other driver does the same. That I will forfeit out of my wages \$10.00 if I wilfully or designedly fail to comply with the above. It is further understood that I will not tell the price I pay for my Flour or Bacon. Nor in any other way do any thing to the disadvantage of said J. E. Coulter but on the other hand work to his interest generally. In witness whereof I have this day set my hand and seal. Jan. 27th 1890."

"This is to certify that I, J. E. Coulter, do accept the agreement of Avery Fry and do agree to give him Eleven months work from Jan. 1st 1890 to Dec. 1st 1890 whenever the weather will admit of hauling or I can otherwise give him employment without conflicting or causing any interruption with the other hands. That I will give him 50 cts per day for the same and give him his truck patches, house, & firewood ready cut on the newground, teem to haul the same also horse & plow to tend patches, Free.

"That I will fence pasture at my expense & give him use of same for one Cow & his present stock of Hogs free. (he to help to keep same in repair to the proportion of stock he has in).

"That I will sell him such goods & wares as he may need as cheep as any one else or if not give him the Cash to buy same & in the event I havent the cash to get the same for him at same price it was offered although it may be at a loss to me. That I will give him the piece of ground he cleared free for another crop & furnish a horse & plow to cultivate same free. That if he needs any more forage & it does not take over ½ day I will furnish a teem free to haul same.

"That I will let him have my buggy if not too frequent free to take his wife to her fathers.

"That I will not use any obscene or profane language in the hearing of his house or family.

"That I will not do any thing to injure his reputation or lesson

him in the minds of any one unjustly, but on the other hand if he complies as agreed to give him such a recommendation as he deserves. That if I fail when it is possible to give him regular employment I will pay him any damage he may sustain thereby.

"That if I fail to comply with the above maliciously or designedly I will forfeit or pay to said Avery Fry the sum of \$20.00. Given under my hand and seal this the 27th day of Jan. 1890."

These contracts in slightly amended form were written in May and their texts follow:

"This certifies that I, Avery Fry, do hereby agree to work for J. E. Coulter for Eleven months from Jan. 1st 1890 at any and all kinds of work that I am requested to do at 50 cents per day or \$13.00 per month. That I will do all work as directed as near as possible. That I will not loiter [or] loose any time unnecessarily without making due recompense for the same. That I will drive to the best of my ability avoiding all stumps routs [roots] or holes in the road and otherwise drive as directed & see that any other driver does the same & report same promptly if they fail to do so. That if the fence needs repairs from high water or winds will do my proportional part of repairs. That if my hogs get out I will do my part at repairs or if none others are in will repair myself. That I will not abuse any team & if any other driver does report the same at once. That I will see that the feeding is done according to directions and see that no extravagance is carried on in feeding etc. That if I get any goods whatever of J. E. Coulter at a lower price than usual not to tell the price to any one. That I will by [buy] all goods I need whatever of said J. E. C. provided he sells the same as cheap as I can buy elsewhere. That I will not say or do any thing nor make any statement whatever to any one that will be calculated to injure him in any way. But will when needs be do all I can to his advancement. That I will help feed on Sunday and if I desire to leave home see that some one does it. That I will not use any profane or abscene language in the hearing of J. E. C.'s family. That I will in nowise speak any harm of J. E. C. to any one. That if I think or see that any thing has been done by J. E. C. aside from the contract speak to him of the same & not say anything to any one else. That if I fail to comply with any of the above contract will forfeit out of my Wages to said J. E. Coulter \$10.00 for each & every offence. Given under my hand & seal this May 15th 1890."

"Know all men by these presents that I, J. E. Coulter, do accept the above agreement of Avery Fry's & will give him 50 c for every day that he labors for me from Jan 1st for 11 months as per above agreement and will give him his pasture, House & firewood free also the



patches I assigned him & a horse & plow to cultivate them free. Also a team to haul his wood free. That I will sell him such goods as he needs or provide a way for him to get them if I haven't them as cheap as he can get them elsewhere or pay him cash to get them elsewhere. That I will not speak or disclose anything whatever that is injurious to him so long as he is in my employ & complies with the contract. That I will settle with him at expiration of his time and pay him cash for amt. due him. That I will forfeit \$20.00 if I fail to comply as above for each & every offence. That I will give him as regular employ as possible so long as he performs as per contract. That I will forfeit \$20.00 if I fail to do so for every offence. That if he fail to comply as above I am under no obligation to give him employ & will charge \$1.00 per month for all time that he stays after forfeiture. Given under my hand [and] seal this May 15th 1890."

Apart from the mill and logging operations, the principal work to be done was the transportation of lumber, shingles, and other mill products to the railroad shipping points. And it is seen from the Avery Fry contracts that he was a sort of head wagoner. But Avery did other things besides act as a teamster and teamster overseer. In 1889 he "worked" five and a half days hunting rabbits, at his regulation wages of 50 cents a day. It is not clear why he was set to hunting rabbits, whether to provide part of the "makings" of rabbit hash for the Coulter kitchen or to rid the Coulter garden of a pest which had been eating too much cabbage. On occasion Avery would avail himself of Coulter's agreement to let him buy goods at other stores than his own, as when Avery on one of his wagon trips to Connelly Springs bought good to the amount of \$3.90 at a store there. On one occasion Avery levied on Coulter for a little pocket change when on his way to a Negro campmeeting.

Wages in Catawba County as reported in the *First Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of North Carolina for the Year 1887* ran from 45 cents a day downward for men, including board, but only a fourth was paid in cash—the remainder being traded out in stores either owned by the employer or stores with which he had special arrangements. Women were given only 25 cents a day. There was no difference between wages paid to white and colored people. Coulter reporting for farm labor, rated it as inferior. He added that good hands could save enough to set up for themselves and that land was cheap, being about \$2.00 an acre. "Any man can get a home that wants it," he noted. The wages which he paid were well up to these standards and some were beyond. Cradlers (those who cut grain with a scythe and cradle) customarily received \$1.00 a day. Sawyers (those who ran the log carriages at the mill to saw lumber

and those who cut shingle blocks into shingles) received 75 cents a day, and others in less skilled work received 60 cents, 50 cents, and on down; Coulter always rated his workmen by their skill and industry. Abb Simpson frequently drove wagons to the "Switch" and other railroad points, getting 50 cents a day. For his dinner in Hickory he was allowed 15 cents extra. But ordinarily Abb received only 25 cents a day when piddling around.

With as varied activities as Coulter was engaged in, there were a great many kinds of work to be done, petty and more important: "cutting clover," "handling load of cane," cutting logs, grinding feed knives, making horse collars, plowing, hauling wood, ditching, digging up stumps, making pasture fence, greasing harness (on rainy days), splitting rails, carpentry work, clearing new ground, planting, reaping, hoeing, and the various tasks at the mills.

Coulter was by no means a hard taskmaster, but he expected honest and efficient toil from his workmen, and he was handy at docking the wages of those who were guilty of the infractions of well-known and sensible rules. Andy Young was docked 27 cents for "fooling in the creek"; R. C. (Ray) Crow was docked for "beating two oxen"; others were docked 75 cents for losing a hatchet, \$1.00 for "bad conduct," 10 cents "for mashing an oil can," 45 cents for "breaking 6 Doz & 8 Eggs," and various amounts for "fooling about" and trifling around.

Coulter had a sense of humor in recording the names of some of his workmen, giving them high-sounding titles, such as Prof., Rev., Hon., Sir, Royal—"Rev. Abb Simpson," "Alexander Hudson the Great," and "Sir Pink Smith." He boarded in his home some of his workmen, and when their board was not counted in their wages, it was generally \$8.00 a month. In addition to those already mentioned, there were among others: Pink Bolick; Lenoir Brittain, who was paid \$17.40 for clearing a new ground; Marion Brittain (August 11, 1850-November 23, 1942); James Hartsoe; John Herman; John Hoover; John Hoyle; David C. (Dave) Johnson; Alex Keller; Jake and John Linn; Bill Martin; Pete Pruitt (Pruit); John Propst; Lee Rhoney (whose death on May 6, 1932, Coulter noted with sorrow); Bob and Mon Shuford; Jerry and Lee Smith; Pink, Abb, and "Hoot" Smith; Pink and Sid Wilkie; George and Perry Wilson; and Edgar Young. Working for Coulter did not indicate that a person was not a substantial citizen in the community.

While living in the "Nation," Coulter's interest in livestock went little beyond the work stock necessary for his farm, and for hauling, and logging operations. For his own traveling around, often to Happy Home-Connelly Springs, Morganton, Hickory, Newton, Con-

over, and Lincolnton he rode horseback. His favorite riding horse was "Boy," a large gray steed, which he valued at \$165, born in 1883, and which sentiment forbade him from ever selling. Sometimes, but not often, he would use a road cart, a vehicle popular in those days. For visiting, with his family, the kinfolks around Startown and Conover, of course, he used a buggy; and in later years with an increased family he used a surrey. Until the automobile age, he was never without a good riding horse or two. For solid pulling, the dependable mule could not be beat; though for steady but slow going with a heavy load, a yoke of oxen was almost indispensable. In 1888 and 1889 he bought from H. W. Connelly of Connelly Springs two yoke of oxen, a bay horse named "Sam," and a wagon and a cart; in 1890 he bought from M. F. Hull four head of oxen, a mule named "Sam," a wagon, and a road cart; and from others he bought work animals and equipment. A good ox would sell from \$12.50 on up. In 1890 Coulter sold to Pink Stilwell a mule for \$135 and a wagon for \$40.37. One of his favorite mules was "Mike." Now and then he would hire a mule to some workman or neighbor for 25 cents a day. For raising mules in the neighborhood he stood a jack, whose management was assigned to Sanford Cline (December 26, 1868-October 20, 1936), who as long as he lived was almost as close to Coulter as a brother. In 1892 in some unknown way Coulter became a co-partner with Perry Chapman in standing a jack in Wilbarger County, Texas.



## CHAPTER IV

### IN THE "NATION"—OTHER BUSINESS

THE country store was long a vital part in the economic and social affairs of any region. It was a relatively easy undertaking to set up a small store, where barter for country products was the general rule; and anyone in a business large enough to require a few workmen found merchandising almost a necessary as well as a profitable appendage.

One merchandising house, which was not a country store, but was as well known throughout rural regions as if it had been located at every crossroads, was J. Lynn & Co., a New York novelty house, which sold by mail anything from 2 cents up to \$1.00 or possibly a little more, mostly trinkets of all kinds—and it always enclosed its catalogue wrapped around the article. Coulter now and then ordered from J. Lynn things for his customers, for what J. Lynn had to sell would never be found in a country store, and there would, therefore, be no competition.

It seems that Coulter entered the mercantile business soon after moving to the "Nation." Probably his store was operating before his sawmill on the river had been set going. The store was across the road from his house. A few years later he ran for a time a store about five miles to the westward, in Burke County. His workmen traded out most of their wages in Coulter's stores—especially the one near his house. In addition to country produce from the fields and forests, including goobers (never at that time called peanuts), the greatest specialties in this barter trade were chickens and eggs brought in by the countrymen. In fact this trade became so important that Coulter added to his mill business the making of egg crates. This whole section of North Carolina was now booming in the chicken and egg business. During the first two months of 1888 there were shipped out of Hickory alone 37,500 dozen of eggs—going almost

entirely to the Northern markets. Coulter hauled most of his chickens and eggs to Connelly Springs, where he shipped them to various customers, or sold them to the local merchants. In one shipment in 1891 he sold to a firm in Washington 252 dozen eggs at 10 cents a dozen. He sold smaller consignments of eggs and chickens to cities near home. In 1890 he sold to the Glen Rock Hotel in Asheville 32 chickens at 13 cents apiece and 30 dozen eggs at 16 cents a dozen—though eggs in the 1880's and 1890's were generally selling for 10 cents a dozen and chickens for the same apiece. Large chickens brought a little more.

Among the other items of country produce brought in to barter for supplies out of the store were blackberries and melons, cider, butter, tallow, corn, apples (fresh and dried in slices), and fresh fish from the river. The country store handled a little of everything that a countryman thought he might need, food, feed, hardware, and "dry goods and notions." As detailed in Coulter's ledger books the most frequent purchases for the kitchen and dining room were: salt (1 cent per pound, 90 cents a sack), coffee, pepper, vinegar (20 cents the gallon), cinnamon bark, essence of peppermint, "Tube Rose" flour (\$2.50 a sack), butter (10 cents the pound), lard, molasses (40 cents a gallon), syrup (45 cents a gallon), fresh fish from the river (about 1 cent apiece, depending on size), fresh and dried beef (fresh, 4 cents a pound), souse, boneless ham, breakfast strips (9 cents a pound), bacon (10 cents a pound), sweet and Irish potatoes, kroust, rice, onions (50 cents a bushel), Arbuckle's coffee (20 cents a pound), borax, soap, and jars.

For the household came: toothbrushes, "hair restorer," "Dr. King's New Discovery," laudinum, pills, umbrellas, handkerchiefs, straw hats (20 cents apiece), pants, socks, coat and vest (\$3.80), celluloid collars, suspenders (25 cents), gloves (35 cents), overalls (\$1.45), full suit of clothes (\$5.65), boots (\$1.80), shoes (\$1.15-\$1.60), Sunday shoes (\$2.00), brogan shoes, sole leather, buckets (25 cents apiece), lamp chimneys, kerosene oil (15 cents a gallon), pocket knives, "Christmas tricks" (60 cents), calico, linseys, gingham, alamanace (6 cents a yard), needles (5 cents a package), and thread (5 cents a spool).

The following items might be termed "workman's delight," since they catered largely to his appetite and they were sometimes bought in such combinations as these, "coffee, tobacco and snuff," "coffee, snuff, tobacco & goobers," and "molasses and snuff." Added to these items were: cider (30 cents a gallon), wine (15 cents a quart), brandy and whiskey (not for sale at Coulter's store, but he gave orders to workmen to get these items "at Johnsons"), powder and shot (for

rabbit hunters), sardines, soda crackers, "oysters & crackers, 10 cents," and candy. Tobacco came in plugs and twists (mostly chewing in the "Nation," little smoking), and were in 5-cent and 10-cent sizes. The favorite plug brand was "Dan Maginty"; favorite twists were "Gray Mule" and "Oliver Twist." Goobers were irresistible and sold at a pocket full for 5 cents.

For the barn, the fields, and the outdoors generally, people bought: oats ( $1\frac{1}{2}$  cents a sheaf), straw, corn, pea meal, bran and "middlings" (also "shorts"), cattle powders, chicken cholera medicine, axle grease, machine oil, horse shoes (5 cents each), mule shoes, saddles, bridles, bridle bits, curry combs (15 cents each), plows, plow points, hoes, hammers, handsaws (65 cents apiece), pocket rulers (25 cents apiece), files, nails (4 cents a pound), shingle nails, hinges (10 cents a pair), axes (90 cents apiece), log chains (\$1.45 apiece), and bolts.

Coulter obtained some of his merchandise from stores in Hickory and Newton, but he depended to a very considerable extent on larger wholesale houses in the North. He bought much from D. J. Foley & Co. of Baltimore. He bought some of his tobacco from country producers nearby. A supplier at Jacobs Fork post office wrote him, "I Send you a box Toba that I know will Soot you." He bought also from the Richmond Tobacco Company, Richmond, Virginia.

In the capacity of a merchant, Coulter did not sell pigs, but now and then there appeared in his mercantile ledgers the sale of a pig for \$1.00. That was the customary price for pigs, not quite giving them away, but about like the price of a calf, which was considered a more suitable present than a pig. Pigs and calves were above cats, which were given away; and anyone accepting a cat was doing a special favor to the donor.

More related to the mercantile business were certain agencies which Coulter annexed and as time went on he was to make agencies an important part of his business activities, beginning his letterhead "J. E. COULTER, Agent," and then listing his various manufactures and then his agencies. At this time he was agent for Piedmont Wagons, made in Hickory, and also in a minor capacity for fertilizers. He did his banking first with the Catawba County Bank, in Newton, and the Citizens Bank of Hickory; but by 1892 he seemed to be banking exclusively with the First National Bank of Hickory. Paying by check was throughout his life his fixed custom; and occasionally when he found himself out of his office and without a small check book, he would improvise a check on any piece of paper at hand, and the bank would honor it. But it was even a more unusual method of checking on a bank account, to write a letter to the cashier, as for example: "Connelly Springs, N. C., Sept. 30, 1896. Mr. K. C. Menzies,



Cas., Hickory, N. C. Dear Sir:— Please pay Mr. T. R. Glass \$100.00, One Hundred Dollars, and charge to my acct. Respy., J. E. Coulter. N.B. I am out of check book. J. E. C."

All of Coulter's business enterprises and activities were firmly based on credit throughout his life, and it was credit that worked both ways. He was constantly borrowing by giving notes and mortgages and likewise he was accepting notes and mortgages to secure debts owed to him. He began his career in the "Nation," as has been noted, by giving two notes of \$200 each on his first purchase of land there. Scarcely any land or other property he ever owned was long without carrying a mortgage. He mortgaged his original 169 acres to secure a loan of \$195; he mortgaged the Tucker Shoals as security for a loan of \$168.25; in 1891 he borrowed from his father Philip Augustus \$900 and gave as security a mortgage on 349 acres.

In 1888 for a debt of \$250.80 that John Robinson, Miles M. Deal, Sid Deal, and John Deal (May 28, 1866-January 13, 1949) (all of Burke County) owed Coulter, he accepted a mortgage on a shingle machine; joiner, packer, and belt; two Piedmont one-horse wagons; one two-horse wagon, and a milch cow. To secure a debt of \$240 owed him he held a mortgage on a sawmill building, a fifteen-horsepower engine, and other mill equipment. For small loans which he made he held chattel mortgages on almost anything which the borrower possessed. For a loan of \$12.00 he held a mortgage on the entire growing crop, "one Red & White spotted cow five years old valued at \$20.00, and one Black & White spotted cow 5 years old valued at \$20.00 Dollars." Also he held chattel mortgages on horses, mules, sheep, shoats, colts, "one Black and White spotted stump Tailed horned Ox and one Mooley Red Cow," corn crops, wheat crops, shot guns, rifle guns, and so on. Later he was not to bother himself and others with such trifling debts due him and even many much, much larger ones—and much to his financial loss; and even when he held such papers often he was to allow them to run out of date and become worthless. All of which would re-enforce the fact that being a "Shylock" or strict collector was as far from his nature as the upper and nether poles of the earth.

Never ambitious for political office, yet Coulter was always vitally interested in politics; he was a Democrat of the staunchest kind. He lived in a county which for years had proudly born the honor of being the "Banner Democratic County of North Carolina." One of his greatest desires was to keep it so. He had grown up during the Reconstruction era and had learned to detest the treatment the Radical Republicans had given the South, and to detest even more these tormentors. He scarcely ever called them Republicans, but rather

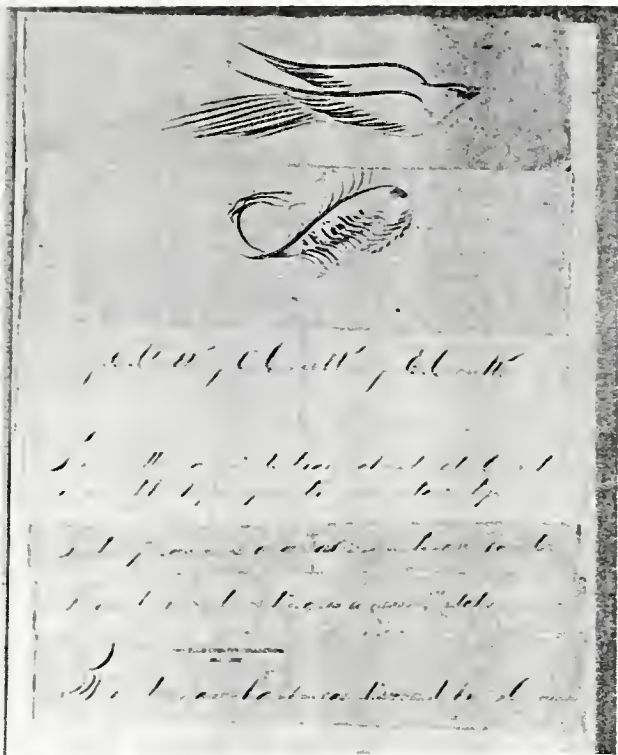
"the Radicals." And though he was a good neighbor to all without regard to politics or religion, he felt a slight contempt for a mild Republican and a vast contempt for a blatant Radical. Sometimes he would remark, "I had rather be a wart on the hind leg of a *yaller* dog than to vote the Radical ticket."

And so in the "Nation" he worked for the success of the Democratic Party every time an election came around. Generally he was a delegate or alternate to the county convention, as in 1888 when both he and his father Philip Augustus were alternate delegates. That year Bandys Township voted 125 for Grover Cleveland for president and 50 for Benjamin Harrison. In 1892 he was a delegate to the county convention and was appointed to the Committee on Credentials, was made a member of the Executive Committee, and was elected a "senatorial delegate" and a "Congressional delegate." For his work in the Congressional election of 1890 he received a letter of appreciation from John S. Henderson, the Democrat, who was re-elected: "I wish to return to you my cordial thanks for the splendid work you did in Catawba County during the late campaign. Major Shuford wrote to me that you were the very best worker in the county. It may be some satisfaction to you to know that your work for the party is thankfully appreciated in by your Representative in Congress." Coulter re-enforced his political knowledge and Democratic ardor by constantly subscribing for and reading Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*. Also he induced some of his neighbors and workmen to take it.

The Coulters made friends easily and it was not long before they were learning to know and visit with their neighbors, and long afterwards to sing their praises and to remember their little foibles. Some of the families in the "Nation," including part of Burke County were: Asherbranners (variously spelled Asherbraners, Ashbranners, Ashurbranners, Ashurbrannurs, etc.), Boyles, Brendles, Britains, Buffs, Burnses, Chapmans, Clines, Crows, Foards, Friddles, Frys, Fullbrights, Hickses, Hildebrands (also spelled Hilderbrands, Hilderbrans, and Hildebrans), Hoyles, Hudsons, Huffmans, Hulls, Johnsons, Lails, Linns, Martins, Mostellers, Mulls, Pendletons, Propsts, Reeps, Reinhardtts, Rhoneys, Rudisills, Sains, Seagles, Shufords, Smiths, Speagles, Tallents, Tuckers, Warlicks, Whistnants, Wilfongs, Wilkies, Williams, Wilsons, and Youngs.

After Coulter moved away he kept track of many of these people and long had business dealings with some of them. Before he left, Hosea Burns moved away to Missouri, and when he died at the age of 82, Coulter remembered him as an old friend in the "Nation." Three or four years after Coulter had gone, J. J. Hicks, who was

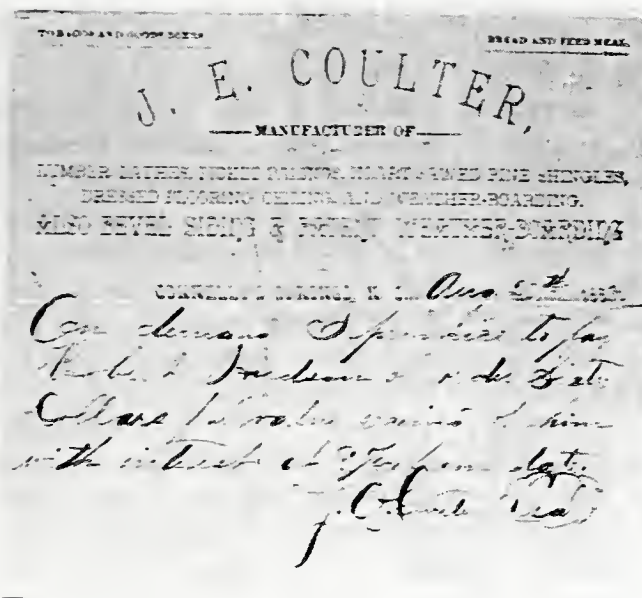




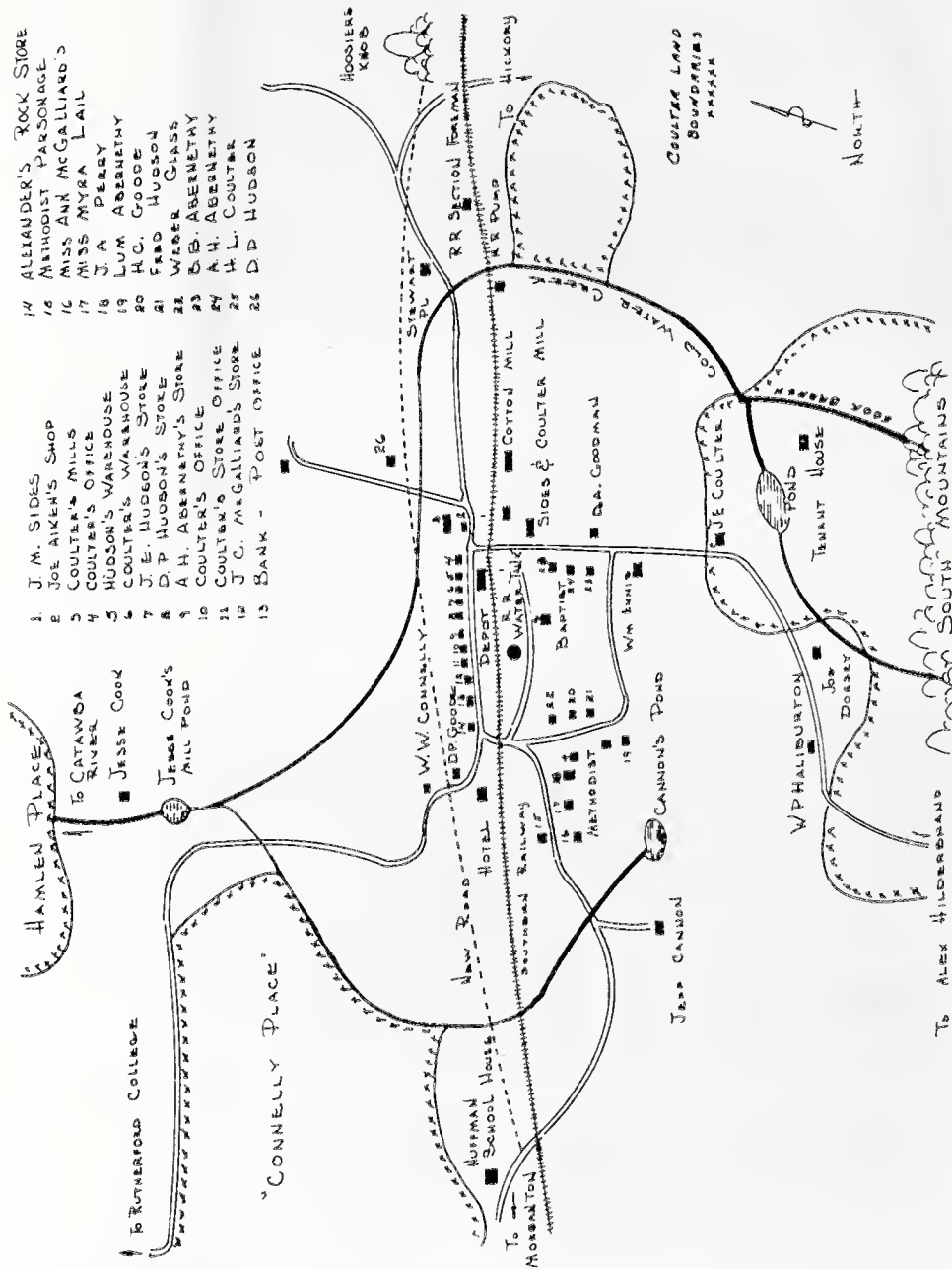
*Top:* COULTER'S EARLY SPENCERIAN SCRIPT. *Bottom:* LOOM AND WEAVE HOUSE (*left*), HOLLY TREE (*center*), AND OLD PHILIP COULTER LOG RESIDENCE (*right*).







Top: MILLS AT TUCKER SHOALS ON JACOBS FORK RIVER. Bottom: COULTER'S EARLY LETTERHEAD (1888), USING "CONNELLYS SPRINGS" POST OFFICE.



MAP OF CONNELLY SPRINGS IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY.



continuing to do business with Coulter, after seeing him on a visit, wrote, "May God Bless you he has Blessed me since I saw you Mr. Coulter." When the Coulters were living in Connelly Springs they looked forward to some Sunday when they might hitch up the horse to the buggy and drive over to the "Nation" to see old friends—or after the automobile era to drive over and back on a Sunday and be able to have a longer visit.

Life in the "Nation" was pleasant even if there were no towns of any size nearer than Hickory and Newton. Lucy Ann Coulter liked to exchange visits with Dempsey Huffman (wife of Russ) and others. She liked to remember little stories about Betsy Boyles and "Hoot" Smith, who helped in the garden and sometimes helped with the family washing. Any woman who had taken on the gentility and gentleness of old age was likely to be referred to as "Granny." There was Granny Kate Brittain; but the Granny most affectionately remembered was Granny Tucker.

Granny Tucker was the wife of Sam Tucker, who had sold the Tucker Shoals to Coulter when he moved to the "Nation." Sam had died in early March, 1888 (the lumber and nails for his coffin cost \$1.00), and left his wife a widow for the remainder of her life. Coulter and two others (M. F. Hull and D. M. Brittain) were appointed to "lay off" a year's support for Granny and to make an inventory of her household and kitchen furniture. They listed the following items in her little cabin home: 2 beds, a table, 3 books, a map, 5 bottles, a honey dish, 3 chairs, 5 pounds of tallow, 2 tablecloths, 8 towels, a satchel, 5 pounds of wool yarn, 5 plates, 3 dishes, a sugarbowl, a butter dish, a smoothing iron, a pan and lid, a coffee kettle, a candle molds, 3 tin pans, a bucket, 2 cups, a set of knives and forks, 2 water buckets, an oven lid and pot rack, a shovel, wheat worth \$25.00, bacon to the amount of \$10.00, some salt, a cow, 2 hogs, a straw stack, and chickens worth \$1.60. There was also a note of Coulter to Tucker amounting to \$208.80 (probably in part payment for the Tucker Shoals), which with the above items made Granny's estate worth \$300.

From this time on Granny became a sort of appendage of the Coulter family, and it became the order of the day to make visits frequently out to Granny's cabin, which was on the hill a little way up above the mill. Granny was a constant customer at Coulter's store, buying Arbuckle's coffee, sugar, snuff, tobacco (she probably smoked a clay pipe as well as "dipped" snuff), candy, syrup, soda, a little fertilizer for her garden, and various other needed items for her house and her comfort. Coulter kept her supplied with wood, with Abb Simpson cutting it for her. He also saw that she was kept

supplied with chicken cholera medicine, for Granny's chief stock in trade at the store was eggs and chickens. Of course, she never suffered for want of anything she needed, for Coulter made frequent small payments on the note he owed, which served as a sort of endowment or social security system for Granny.

After the Coulters moved to Connelly Springs, they remembered to visit Granny Tucker at every opportunity. Coulter wrote his father Philip Augustus in June, 1895, that "We all" went over to Mrs. Tucker's last Sunday. She had been sick a long time and had sent word that she "wanted to see us" before she died. In 1899 a neighbor of Granny's wrote Coulter informing him that Granny "said tell you that she was still able to be about a little but is very weak." In January, 1900 Granny wrote Coulter that she wanted him to come down and she ended her letter by saying "So tell Mrs. Coulter houdy." In the following March she wrote that she was sick and was getting no better, and that she wanted Coulter to come down: "So come down at once, and fale not as I want to see you So come down." Before the month was ended Granny died. She had appointed Coulter her executor in her will, which she made July 4, 1894. Her estate amounted to \$35.00 after expenses had been met, and this she had left in her will to St. Johns Baptist Church in Burke County. The Coulters were never to forget Granny Tucker, and the Coulter children likewise held Granny in grateful memory, for they had always liked to visit Granny Tucker in her cabin on the hill overlooking Jacobs Fork River.

Mintie Bolick, the orphan girl whom Coulter had taken into his household before he moved to the "Nation," remained until 1888, when she married Robert M. Hudson (May 13, 1866-April 17, 1958), who was working for Coulter. Mintie was always a favorite of the Coulters. In 1898 Robert was bit by a mad dog, and he came immediately to Connelly Springs, to which place Coulter had moved, to secure aid for a trip to New York to receive treatment at the Pasteur Institute. A collection from the citizens was taken up for him; he went to New York and was cured. A Morganton newspaper, *The Farmer's Friend*, in noting the occasion remarked that Hudson was "an excellent citizen but a poor man." In a letter to Coulter this "country boy" who had never been in a town bigger than Hickory, gave some impressions of the City of New York: "New York is a Big place the people ar so thick tha Bloc the strets Some times I Cant Under Stand this lan guede [language] tha is So many Jermans and all Kinds I Cant Under Stand more than half these people sa"

The country doctor who served the "Nation" was Fred T. Foard



(September 3, 1855-June 17, 1914), who was a lifelong friend of the Coulters. His remedies were generally efficacious, including even colored water and lightbread pills administered to certain patients who insisted that they were sick. Dr. Foard knew human psychology. Lucy Ann Coulter enjoyed telling how the doctor had administered the colored water and lightbread pills to certain people whom she knew.

It was Dr. Foard who presided at the birth of the three Coulter children who were born in the "Nation": Beulah Belle (September 28, 1885), Clyde David Franklin (October 17, 1887), and Ellis Merton (July 20, 1890). These children were baptized in the Sardis Lutheran Church, about five or six miles away, where the Coulters held their membership.

The Coulters were good at visiting their neighbors, and they also kept track of their kin, farther away. In Conover lived Julia A. Huitt, Lucy Ann's mother, and also Lucy Ann's sister Martha, who had married Jerome Bolick, and also Lucy Ann's half sister Cora Huitt, who sometimes later would marry Casper S. Coiner of Virginia. There was much visiting back and forth, and Sister Cora was especially attracted by the country life in the "Nation." At one time she hoped to set up a little school in the Coulter "mansion," where she and Lucy Ann would teach a few children in addition to the Coulter "young 'uns."

Then, there were the Coulters in the Startown community of Jacobs Fork Township, John Ellis' father and mother, Philip Augustus and Mary Elvira, and his sister Katie, who married Raymond Robinson and lived not far from the old home, and his brothers, Claud and Phil ("Ton"). Brother Frank was much in the "Nation" for most of the time John Ellis lived there, working for John Ellis in the lumber and shingle business and now and then running a little business of his own. The ten or a dozen miles to the old home was not a long drive for a half day or less.

Brother Claud seems to have spent a short time in the "Nation," working in John Ellis' establishment in 1891: but the next year he married Lillian B. Sigmon (January 17, 1875-September 5, 1956), and began a family, numbering eleven children in all: Nora (Mrs. C. B. Armstrong), Annie Lee (Mrs. C. B. Lutz), William Philip, Katie (Mrs. D. R. King), Ila (Mrs. H. B. Little), Vernon, Louise (Mrs. R. L. Quickel), Lillian ("Dimple") (Mrs. E. V. Tolson), David, Charles, and Richard. Caught in the Texas fever, which was flourishing considerably in Catawba County and elsewhere, Claud moved to Bowie, Texas, arriving on November 7, 1895. He remained there



until early in the twentieth century, engaging in farming and wagoning. The call of the old home brought him back.

Besides visiting his neighbors and kindred and making business trips to the nearby towns and to Asheville and other farther-away places, Coulter now and then rode away on "Boy" to Hickory, Newton or Morganton on social and business occasions. The *Press and Carolinian*, a Hickory newspaper, reported on January 8, 1891: "While Mr. Ellis Coulter was enjoying the Piedmont Wagon supper on the night of December 31st, some villain stole his horse from the stable on the 'alley' and rode it out into the woods beyond the wagon works and hitched it, where it stood without food or drink for two days and nights before it was found. A human being who could thus treat a dumb animal is too mean to live."

In the "Nation" a man was not properly dressed unless he wore boots; there were boots for ordinary work and boots for Sunday—though Coulter's store sold some "Sunday shoes." Another custom peculiar to the "Nation," but if not so it was not to last long elsewhere: To usher in the New Year in a becoming manner, parties formed and went around about midnight firing their guns and pistols. The "New Year Shooters" made their annual visits to the Coulter house. It is not recorded in the archives whether or not these "Shooters" expected or received a "hand-out" of cakes and cider for this special friendly recognition. The Halloween "Trick or Treat" barbarism had not yet been invented.

A lifelong friend of the family with his two children George and Eben was L. M. (Mon) Williams. In the late 1880's Mon was clerking in Coulter's store at 48 cents a day and by the early 1890's he had been raised 2 cents a day to exactly 50 cents. George and Eben were typical country boys, chock-full of mischief. One of their escapades was: both to ride an opinionated mule which had made up its mind to carry only one of the boys at a time. Their strategy was for one to get on the mule and then ride under the limb of a tree on which the other was perched and let him drop down on the mule. Old gentleman Mon remarked, "Them boys would ride the devil if they could get on him." After Coulter moved to Connelly Springs, Mon clerked for him there for a time. Mon was a great favorite with the Coulter children, especially with one of the boys after he had presented him with a Confederate flag, which Mon had brought back from a Confederate soldiers' reunion—Mon had been a brave Confederate soldier. The Williams boys got the Western fever and roamed far beyond the Mississippi River. George became a doctor of medicine and practiced in Iowa and Nebraska. From the latter state he wrote humorously in 1901, "Business is only moderate. The

health is distressingly good." But he saw hope in the future: "A rythum of good health is sure to be followed by a storm of sick folks." In his later life Mon spent some months in Lincoln, Nebraska, on a visit to his son. If there was anything which Mon liked better than his family and friends, it was his tobacco chewing. He was scarcely ever to be seen without a chew in his mouth, except at meals and in his sleep.

Coulter's closest and longest-continuing business association was with Sanford Cline. It was more than a business association; it was a friendship which lasted as long as Sanford lived. Sanford Cline was a mechanical genius, a dreamer who never quite reached success in anything, who was beset by many misfortunes, disappointments, trials, and tribulations. He never soured on the world, though he thought deeply and tried to find remedies for the ills he saw around him. He was Coulter's handiest man around the mill, whether it was looking after the machinery or hauling logs. Sanford was a lad of less than 16 years of age when Coulter first moved to the "Nation" and came in contact with him. Coulter saw that he was an unusual boy.

In 1892 preparatory to moving to Connelly Springs, Coulter sold to Sanford two-thirds interest in the Tucker Shoals and mill and 7 additional acres—the shoals tract being slightly over 3 acres. They now formed the firm of "J. E. Coulter & Co. Manufacturers of Lumber, Shingles, Laths, Picket Palings, Goods and Tobacco Boxes, Meal, Molasses, etc." Sanford had a little business of his own, with which Coulter did not care to be associated, though the same letterhead with a rope of dividing lines separating the names of the two firms was used for both. The part of the letterhead belonging to Sanford individually read: "Sanford Cline Manufacturer and Retail Dealer in Pure White Corn Whisky. A Fine Article."

Sanford, who lived on the hill above the mill and not very far from Granny Tucker's, succeeded in adding to his business by getting established on November 11, 1893 a post office named Millstone, of which he became postmaster, running it in his own yard. The post office was a weakling which never grew. On one occasion in 1895 Sanford wrote Coulter to send him \$3.00 worth of stamps and postal cards, because his supply had run out. The office was discontinued on September 9, 1897. Sanford did not prosper as a member of J. E. Coulter & Co. He was soon badly in debt to Coulter, and the mill continued mostly Coulter's financial concern. The company was dissolved sometime before 1900 and soon afterwards Sanford organized the firm of "Cline & Wilkie," whose demise was noted in Sanford's own letterhead: "Office of Sanford Cline, Successor to Cline &



Wilkie, Manufacturer of Finished Lumber and Shingles. Orders Solicited." He gave as his post office address, Henry.

By this time Sanford's mechanical genius was beginning to assert itself in a planer and matching machine which would polish off and groove the roughest lumber passing over knots and curls as smoothly as over the rest of the plank. This invention seemed to be the answer to the lumberman's dream; but to build this planer with all the parts necessary was a slow and costly job, and for some years Sanford was constantly working to make improvements. In June, 1901, he wrote that he was "moving on building my invention. It is costing Steep." By 1905 he thought that he was ready to have it patented, but in 1910 he was still working on improvements. The next year he wanted to set it up at Coulter's mill in Connelly Springs, where the public could better see it work. He had already been running it over in the "Nation," and his customers said that it was doing the finest work they had ever seen. He soon set it up down at Lincolnton and was about to sell the invention for \$11,000, but the contemplated company was unable to raise the capital, which was to be \$35,000.

He brought the machine back and in 1914 he believed he had won out with it in a deal he had made with the Carolina Foundry & Machine Co. of Winston-Salem. They were going to manufacture it "true to my own idea of a machine of merit." He was now much encouraged and felt that he would soon be out of debt and his financial worries ended. In May, 1914 he moved to King, a small town in Stokes County, near Winston-Salem, where he organized the "R. P. Reese Company," consisting of Reese and himself and capitalized at \$35,000, but Sanford had in the company only his machine and a job. He now expected to pay Coulter all he owed.

As he said a little later, "I will be awfully glad if I can get square and even once in my life." He hoped that Coulter could sell the shoals and all of Sanford's land thereabouts and his house, for enough to satisfy Sanford's debts to him and leave a little for Sanford himself. Sanford thought it was high time to get rid of the property, for the buildings were falling down, people were dynamiting the river for fish and someone might soon dynamite the dam because of complaints of landowners above that their bottom lands were being ruined by the water which the dam backed up. There was nothing more to be made at the shoals, he said: "As I see it big Biz. has taken the place of little Biz. and I cant see much to a little man any more." No sale was made.

More disappointments; his fair hopes at King vanished; he was soon back in the "Nation"; but what to do now? In 1912 he had launched out on a little undertaking (a sort of side-line) which he



thought might bring in a little money. He had studied the "science of phrenology," and announced that he would feel the heads of people and read their character for them at 25 cents a reading, and include a chart with all this information recorded for an additional 75 cents. But the phrenological game had by this time exploded, and Sanford soon retreated from this venture. But here he was back again at the Tucker Shoals in 1916 where he had dreamed dreams and seen visions—back where he had started with nothing but disappointments and disillusionments. But he was determined to use the power at the shoals, if not to saw lumber, then to make electricity. He set up an electric light plant and provided lights for all who would contract to take them. Times were now hard and he could secure only five customers, for people could not afford to put up lines and have their houses wired. At this same time Sanford had begun to make concrete drainage tiles and large ones for incasing wells. Coulter allowed him to display them on his land and to aid in their sale, but little came of this.

In the spring of 1906 Sanford had been on a trip and returning late one night, tired and cold, he sat down in front of the fire and dozed off. He fell and before he could recover himself his celluloid collar blazed up and burned his face badly and destroyed one of his eyes. He went to the Presbyterian Hospital in Charlotte for treatment, where the doctors grafted skin on his face and healed his burns. But one side of his face remained disfigured and his recovery was not entirely satisfactory. In 1915 he went to the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore for further treatment. On September 15th he wrote Coulter, "I have entered the hospital here to get my eye and face mended up," and early the next year he gave this report on his condition: "I have been pretty tore up and made over and am in some better shape than I was."

Had Job of old been more beset with adversities, misfortunes, and disappointments than Sanford? By 1915 Sanford had begun to wonder whether there must not be something wrong somewhere else than in himself. Soon he began reading *The Appeal to Reason*, a Socialist propaganda paper published in Girard, Kansas, and through it he received much assistance and direction in his thinking. In his correspondence with Coulter he turned to philosophizing on the ills of the times, how things were out of joint, and it was high time that something were being done. He sought to show Coulter he was living in a sort of fool's paradise. "I am mailing you under separate cover a copy of *The Appeal to Reason*. I hope you will read it and pass it to your intelligent friends." He said that it gave information "that other papers dont tell."

Sanford thought that a new political party and a new religion were necessary to bring relief. He began to see a struggle between capital and labor and he thought the laboring man should look more to his own interests. "As you no doubt are aware," he wrote, "that there is an industrial struggle going on with labor organized against capital in every known civilized nation and it is behooving the people that work to come in line with their own interest before they are. . . ." Sanford said that he was in debt and saw no way to get out except through a new dispensation. "If the workers produce and market a great abundance," he asked, "should they (with a just government administration) be as prosperous as they are productive? If not, why not? And my friend, you say you want to offer me some of the best advice a man in my condition ever had—to quit abusing my mind with Socialism and join the Dem or Rep party. My friend according to the light you have allowed yourself to accept on Socialism I believe you're fully sincere in this advice. But my friend can you back up this advice by your success and the prosperity of the workers and planters of the country under 50 years administration of these parties?"

Getting much of his argument from *The Appeal to Reason*, Sanford continued, "The war between capital and labor is growing fiercer day by day and must of necessity be fought to a finish. We must win or perish. . . . My friend Socialism is a big subject. It appeals to the mind of intelligence. I can't write the whole subject, but if you learn it you must study it. . . . I am searching my way out the best path I can find."

Coulter's side of the correspondence has long since disappeared, but it can be easily inferred that he thought Sanford was about to lose his mind, and that he should be pitied more than blamed. He believed that Sanford had become an atheist and so charged him; Sanford denied that he did not believe in God but admitted that he did not accept the orthodox kind. He believed that a revolution was coming and he hoped that his friend Coulter would be found on the right side.

Sanford was an honest but disappointed and disillusioned man. The highest test of a man's honesty was in a horse trade. On one occasion, Sanford in offering to swap his mule for a horse of Coulter's gave this honest description of his mule: "The little mule is a good one of its size. It is young supple and quick & never kicks or squeals any for us but she don't like a stranger." He never got out of debt to Coulter, and as late as 1935 Coulter was paying the taxes on the Tucker Shoals, although he owned but a one-third interest. Later Sanford's son bought Coulter's interest for \$200. On October 20, 1936 Sanford had started to Hickory and when he reached Hildebran he suddenly

dropped dead. This was sad news for his old friend Coulter. Sanford was not quite 68 years old. He was buried in the "Old Chapman Cemetery," a beautiful and well-kept spot on the top of a hill near the banks of the Jacobs Fork River.



## CHAPTER V

### HAPPY HOME – ICARD – CONNELLY SPRINGS

WHEN Coulter moved to the "Nation" in 1884 he settled within a half mile of the Burke County line, and had, therefore, become almost a resident of that county. Much of his business was carried on with Burke Countians, many of his logs and shingle blocks came from that county, and soon he was to own more land in Burke than in Catawba. His main railroad outlets were in Burke, Happy Home-Icard-Connelly Springs and Bowman's Crossing (the "Switch"). By 1888 a set of letterheads gave his post office as Connelly Springs. His wagons in hauling lumber and shingles to that point did much trading in items not available in the "Nation," and he carried on important transactions with the main businessmen of that place. It was only natural, therefore, that this railroad point should act as a magnet inevitably drawing him to locate both his business establishments and his residence there.

As early as 1887 he may have been thinking of moving to Connelly Springs, for he was being offered this year \$2,000 for his home place or \$1,500 for some farm land and a half interest in his mills; but he did not choose to sell at this time. However, preparatory later to moving, he sold to D. F. Huffman 24 acres for \$110, excepting all timber. Later he sold to Richard C. Young 60 acres for \$385. Although he was getting ready to move to Burke County he sold in 1892 348 acres in that county to G. W. Hildebrand and C. C. Cook for \$1,395.40; but this land was in Lower Fork Township near his home in the "Nation." As previously mentioned, he sold a two-thirds interest in the Tucker Shoals to Sanford Cline, and organized with Sanford as a partner J. E. Coulter & Company. So, sometime in the year 1892, probably in the fall, Coulter moved to Connelly Springs. He had prospered in the "Nation," his taxes increasing ten-fold, but he would do better at a railroad station. His influence in the "Nation"

had had a marked effect there, and the stimulation he gave this community was long to be felt and remembered.

Pioneers had been pushing into the Burke County part of North Carolina before the Revolution, settling first the fertile valleys of the Catawba River and its tributaries. Burke County had been organized in 1777 and included most of the western part of the state. A spring near the south bank of the river became the nucleus of a settlement first called Alder Spring, but after General Daniel Morgan had won his resounding victory over the British at Cowpens, the settlers honored him by calling it Morgan. It then became Morganborough and finally Morganton. It was incorporated in 1783, and commissioners were appointed to erect a courthouse and jail. As the county seat Morganton became the most important town in all Western North Carolina.

Connelly Springs had its beginning as a tavern on the Great Western Stage Line running from Salisbury to Morganton, and on across the mountains, in the course of time, to Asheville, which was laid out in 1794 and first called Morristown. Three years later its name was changed to Asheville. Connelly Springs was almost half way between Salisbury and Asheville, the 68 milepost being in the village—it was 71 miles on to Asheville. These were measurements on the railroad when it was built.

The first settlers who were to make the village which grew up around the tavern, had come into this region soon after the Revolution and had secured land on both sides of the Catawba River. Prominent among these families were the Connelys (Conleys). Bryan Connelly seems to have been the pioneer of this family, securing land on Free Mason Creek in 1782. Part of this tract he sold to James Connelly in 1788, who sold it to William Connelly in 1796. William apparently was the progenitor of that branch of the family which became prominent in the founding and development of Connelly Springs. It is assumed that William Lewis Connelly (September 3, 1805-May 23, 1855) was his son and it was William L. who moved from Free Mason Creek (probably an early name for the present Gunpowder Creek), a northside tributary of the Catawba River, to the site where Connelly Springs grew up. Here he set up a tavern and a way-station on the stage line.

William L. Connelly probably did not move to the Connelly Springs site before 1838, for that year he served as captain of the 79th Regiment of Volunteer Militia raised to remove the Cherokee Indians to the West. At that time, mail was addressed to him "near Morganton, Burke Co., N. C." and also "Love Lady, Burke County, N. C." Love Lady had been made a post office in 1834 and was on the northside of



the Catawba River; but when Caldwell was cut off from Burke, in 1841, Love Lady fell in Caldwell. In 1887 its name was changed to Granite, and the next year to Granite Falls.

Among the other families who settled early in the vicinity of Connelly Springs were Ephraim Abee, Joseph Huffman, and Joshua Ballew. About a mile west of the tavern, a graveyard was begun, which came to be called the Huffman Graveyard, and nearby was a one-room structure, which may have had its origin as a church, but years later it was used as a schoolhouse for this region.

Probably the first house in Connelly Springs was a log structure (later added to) built by William L. Connelly. It is thought that the first post office was located in this house, since the first postmaster was William W. Connelly (December 14, 1834-January 27, 1892), a son of William L. Connelly. This same house later came into the possession of James Alexander Stewart, who sold it to Jones Hudson in 1892; and into this very house the Coulters moved when they came to Connelly Springs. They rented it at \$4.00 a month from Hudson, and they always referred to it as the "Stewart Place."

William L. Connelly, who died in 1855 (struck by a bolt of lightning), had other children in addition to William W. They were: Horace W. (1845-June, 1905), Pink (killed in the Civil War in defense of the Confederacy), Louise (August 1, 1849-October 13, 1925, who married the Rev. D. P. Goode [June 29, 1846-December 14, 1913, who was a brave Confederate soldier]), Emma (who married Alex Perry, a fearless officer of the law), and Lizzie (who married J. M. Sides, another Confederate veteran). These men were prominent citizens of Connelly Springs and helped to make up a great family clan.

William W. Connelly became possessed of much of the land on which Connelly Springs grew up and of considerable acreage in the vicinity. Besides being the postmaster, he was also the depot agent (when the railroad reached that point), and in addition he was the principal (if not the only) merchant in the village for some time. And his mother ran a boarding house, which took on greater importance than a tavern stop when the railroad reached the place. In 1861 he married Agnes Elmira Franklin (February 14, 1842-February 27, 1935), a lady from Georgia, who outlived him for many years, and was familiarly known as Mira Connelly.

The first post office was established in Connelly Springs on March 5, 1857 under the name of Happy Home. As far as names were concerned it was quite an attraction to live in a place so called; but the attractiveness was increased when the local division took on the name of Lovelady Township, a name which it was not to give up.



But the name Happy Home was given up on October 2, 1886 and changed to Connellys Springs. The post office name continued with Connellys always ending with the *s*, but it was easier to say Connelly Springs, and that form was universally used except on the postmark.

The change in name was brought about by the discovery of a mineral spring in the midst of the village, and according to tradition it was found in the following way: Mrs. William L. Connelly frequently noticed that clothing when washed in the waters of a spring branch took on an unaccounted-for brownish hue. Investigations were carried out and it was discovered that the water flowing out of the head of the branch had various mineral deposits in it. A spring was dug out and the water was immediately advertised as having valuable medicinal qualities. Very soon a large hotel structure was built, which for years was the making of Connelly Springs.

Down into the twentieth century, countrymen on their way to Connelly Springs referred to the place as Icard. This was enough to confuse anyone. Here was a place still remembered as Happy Home but now officially Connellys Springs, and yet it was being called Icard. The name came in this way. When the railroad reached the place, then called Happy Home, for some reason, the road authorities did not like the name, and they decided to call their railroad station Icard, for pioneers of that name who had long lived in the vicinity. So officially the post office was Happy Home but the railroad station was Icard, and Icard remained the name down until the post office was changed to Connellys Springs, and it was still used by some people for years thereafter. But Icard as a place name was not lost, for on April 19, 1898, a post office was established at Bowman's Crossing (the "Switch") and it was called Icard.

In the late ante-bellum times the State of North Carolina decided to build a railroad into the western part of its dominions. This road was called the Western North Carolina Rail Road and it proceeded slowly westward from Salisbury. Various surveys were carried out along the route before the final choice was made. From Hickory Tavern (Hickory) westward through eastern Burke two surveys were made: one along the Catawba River and the other on the ridge farther to the southward. The river route would require less grading, but more and larger bridges would be necessary. Beginning near the Horse Ford Shoal of the Catawba, and proceeding westward there were Drowning Creek, Jumping Gully, Cold Water Creek, Bridge Creek, Double Branches, Ward's Branch and other streams on to Morganton. The prominent points on the ridge route, with their distances from Salisbury were: Drowning Creek (64.55), Connelly's Gap (65.78, this being the gap at the foot of Hoosiers Knob and re-

quiring considerable grading), Cold Water Creek (67.07), Bridge Creek (68.71), the "Ridge between Bridge Creek and Double Branches" (69.39), Double Branches (70.85), Twigg's Ridge (72.09), Hunting Creek (75.27), "Ridge between Hunting Creek and Morganton" (76.72), and Morganton (77.65). This ridge route was selected. If the Happy Home post office was in the Connelly-Stewart-Coulter-Hudson house, then the 67.07 milepost would mark its distance from Salisbury, for this house was on the north side of the survey on Cold Water Creek, about a quarter of a mile from the point where the survey crossed the creek. The town was to grow up a little to the westward around milepost 68.

R. C. Pearson, president of the "Western North Carolina Rail Road Company," in his report for 1860, stated that the road was in operation from Hickory Tavern "to a point within 13 miles of Morganton. The cars are now transporting passengers to this point, and within a short period we will be enabled to carry both passengers and freight to Icard Station, 11 miles from Morganton, at which point a depot has been located." On August 28, 1861 the chief engineer reported: "The cars are now running to Icard's station and west of that point for five and a half miles." This point was called by the natives "Speagle's Turnout," a name long to be used by the countrymen; but the railroad listed it "H. R." (Head of the Road). To the westward a town grew up in later times, called Drexel.

At this time the railroad had 5 locomotives (bearing names, not numbers), 2 first-class passenger coaches, 2 "second class or Mail cars," 2 baggage cars, and an unstated number of box cars, flat cars, gravel cars, and section cars. According to the timetable issued in 1861, "Passengers going west will dine at Icard's," thus providing considerable business for Mrs. William L. Connelly's boarding house. For many years thereafter this little village became famous as the stopping point for meals; and when finally the trains no longer halted there for meals, lunch boxes were sold through the windows on the sides of the coaches, supplemented by smaller containers filled with peaches and grapes for the passengers whose appetites did not call for a full lunch. In 1888 Connelly Springs was marked on the timetable with an asterisk (\*) explaining "Dinner Station," and a comment that it was a place "that hungry passengers delight to reach"; and it might well have been so, for the westbound train did not arrive until 1:46 p.m.

According to the schedule in effect in 1861, the westbound train arrived at 1:40 p.m. and it departed at 2:10, thus allowing 30 minutes for lunch. The eastbound train arrived at 10:50 a.m. and departed at 11:00. While the passengers were eating lunch the loco-



motive was taking on wood and water—there was a woodyard here (locomotives were wood-burners) at this time. The water-tank was kept filled by a never-failing supply of water brought in by a gravity pipe line from the Sook Branch (a small tributary of Cold Water Creek and named for Sook Connelly, a slave, who lived on its banks). Since there was only one train operating on this end of the road, no dispatching was necessary; and, indeed, none could be done, for there was no telegraph line along the track until 1865, when the American Telegraph Company began building a line. It was first announced that in exchange for the right-of-way, the telegraph company would do "all Rail Road business free of charge," but the superintendent of the telegraph company denied that such an arrangement had been made.

The railroad business as well as other activities of life were greatly interfered with from 1861 to 1865, for during those years the great Civil War was being fought; but before military operations reached this part of North Carolina, the railroad had been built on to a point within three miles of Morganton. At the end of the road there had been built a training camp for soldiers, named Camp Vance in honor of the wartime governor, Zeb Vance. The presence of this camp brought in the devastations of war.

During the last two years of the war, Federal raiders were operating freely in East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia and fanning out through the mountains to the eastward. Ordered out from Knoxville by Major-General J. M. Schofield, Captain George W. Kirk with about 150 to 200 men ("Indians, negroes, and deserters") passed through the mountains of Western North Carolina, and early in the morning of June 28, 1864 fell upon Camp Vance, where about 240 Junior Reserves had been assembled but not yet armed. According to the Federal report "he destroyed a large quantity of rebel property, including 1 locomotive, in fine order, and 3 cars, the depot and commissary buildings, 1,200 small-arms, with ammunition, and 3,000 bushels of grain, besides capturing 277 prisoners, who surrendered with the camp." The Confederate report gave a somewhat different account. By the terms of surrender, the officers were to be paroled "and private property respected." "The officers present secured their goods and chattels, and then the incendiary's torch was stuck to every building except the hospital, which the surgeons by their blarney and ingenious persuasion saved intact. The officers and men were all taken off under guard, except the surgeons, who were paroled, and about seventy men, whom they managed to get on the sick list and crowd into the hospital. The surgeons succeeded in saving about all of their supplies, all the cooking utensils of the camp, and ex-



tinguished the flames in two double cabins of officers' quarters and one row of privates' cabins. There were 250 bushels of corn burned, about 6,500 pounds of forage, some 100 bushels of rye, and 50 of oats; also some 250 guns and accouterments, a goodly number of which were in bad condition, about 1,500 pounds of ammunition, &c. They burned all the office books and papers and all papers and documents in the quartermaster's and commissary departments. They took off 4 government mules and 4 private horses, leaving the 2 wagons and 1 set of harness."

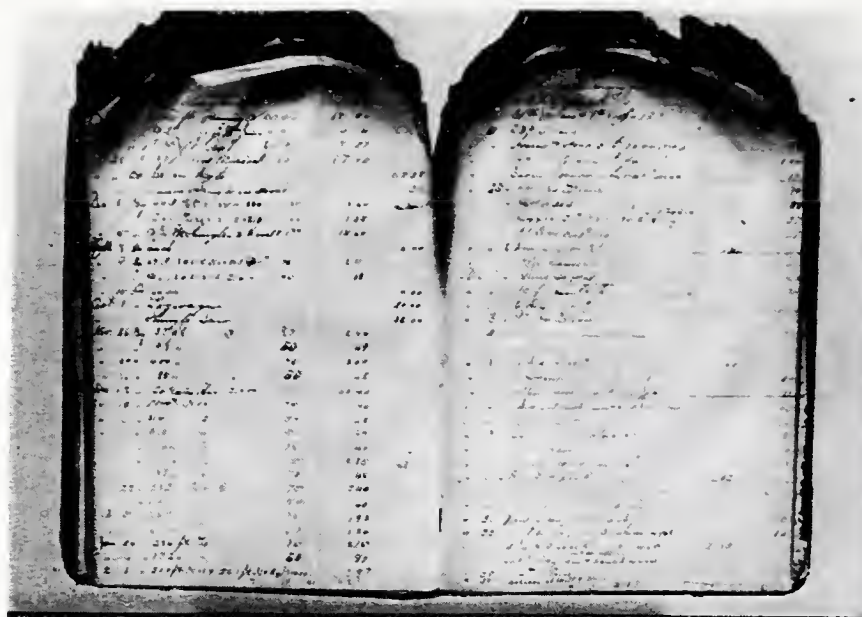
Outriding raiders hit Icard where they destroyed "the Station House and cars" and sent the inhabitants scurrying into hiding for their safety. The railroad inspector reported August 31, 1865, "The depot at Icard's Station is entirely destroyed," but he added that the "water tank at this Station [has] been substantially rebuilt." Other casualties reported at the railroad stockholders meeting in 1865 were "the Depot and cars at the Head of the Road, and a Steam Saw-Mill recently purchased and located five miles east of Morganton." Some of this damage might well have been the result of the raid General George Stoneman made against Morganton in April, 1865, when the war was practically over.

Although there was not much in Happy Home to be destroyed during the war, at least the war had not made this little village any happier. Even so, it seemed to have had a hard time getting over its war devastations, for on June 24, 1867, unable to support a post office any longer it saw the office discontinued; but after two years, times seemed to have picked up, for on May 10, 1869 the post office of Happy Home was re-established. William W. Connelly had remained postmaster from the beginning down to January 5, 1860, when Robert L. Abernethy became postmaster and continued throughout the Civil War. He had been conducting a school a mile or two to the northward, which later would blossom into the well-known institution of Rutherford College. Abernethy was succeeded in the postmastership by W. N. Conley on August 24, 1865, who held the position until May 7, 1866. Edgar F. Jennings now became the postmaster until the office was discontinued in June of the following year. When the office was re-established in May of 1869, Mattie R. Abernethy became the village's first postmistress. She held the position until June 13, 1873, when James P. Little came in. He remained for less than a year, and was succeeded on February 20, 1874 by Miss Emma Connelly who became the village's second postmistress. She was the daughter of the pioneer William L. Connelly and a sister of William W. Connelly, the first postmaster. She held the position for the next thirteen years, serving out the remainder of the



*Top:* STEWART PLACE (RENOVATED), IN CONNELLY SPRINGS. *Bottom:* COULTER RESIDENCE, BUILT IN 1893.





*Top:* STORE LEDGER ACCOUNT BOOK, BURNT IN THE FIRE OF 1897. *Bottom:* POND, BUILT IN THE MIDDLE 1890'S.









Happy Home era and on into the Connelly Springs era for almost three months. She continued until February 20, 1887. She married Alexander Perry. The postmastership was not a very lucrative position, yet when run in connection with a mercantile establishment in a corner of the same building, it was worth fighting for. George A. Miller, who was postmaster as well as a merchant in 1898, received as postmaster \$319.51 for the year.

As time went on, Happy Home took on some gradual but not spectacular growth. More people moved into the village or settled in the outlying regions to the southward into and across the South Mountains and as far northward as the Catawba River Valley. Happy Home could not expect to draw the trade of people living more than five or six miles to the westward or the same distance to the east, since Morganton and Hickory respectively drew upon them. A few merchants set up stores to offer a little competition to William W. Connelly in his mercantile activities. Among them were McEntire, Warlick & Co., who were also "Manufacturers of and Dealers in Plug, Twist and Smoking Tobaccos," and the "Alliance Stock Company," which was what its name indicated, a co-operative set up by the Farmer Alliancemen.

When Coulter came to Connelly Springs in 1892, there was quite a number of old established families in and around the village. As has already appeared the Connellys and their family connections were outstanding; but most likely the family to first settle near where the village grew up were the Fin-Cannons. It is not known when William Fin-Cannon came to America or from what country, but he soon settled the old Fin-Cannon homestead a mile or two away on the foot of the South Mountains. His son Peter lived on the land of his father and built the house (still standing in the twentieth century, with additions) in which he lived and died. His son Jefferson M. (March 8, 1845-March 12, 1911) lived his whole life in this house. He married Sarah (Sallie) Glass (October 7, 1848-August 7, 1921) and became the father of six children: Frank, Jason, Jennie, Emma, Effie, and Charlie. The death of three of these children from typhoid fever in the summer and autumn of 1898 was a tragedy not only to the family but also to the Coulters and to their children, who were neighbors living not far away: Effie, not quite 17 (December 12, 1881-July 10, 1898); Emma, not quite 19 (December 27, 1879-August 20, 1898); and Charlie, a little more than 11 years (August 3, 1887-October 14, 1898). Jason L. (September 30, 1873-January 8, 1889), almost ten years before, had preceded them to the grave, when a little more than 15 years old. Jennie, who had typhoid fever in 1898, recovered and lived until November 19, 1961. The third generation



dropped the "Fin" from the family name, making it simply Cannon.

Probably as early as the coming of the Fin-Cannons, a family by the name of Winters settled far up Cold Water Creek, near its head in the South Mountains. There are no records of when they came or when they left or where they went—only a disintegrating old rock chimney (no graveyard) and the tradition of the "old Winters Place" remained into the twentieth century to mark the spot.

In addition to the Cannons, a family with whom the Coulters came to be close friends, were the Hugh Southerlands, who lived to the northward across the railroad tracks to a distance of about a half mile. As the name implies, they came from Scotland and settled in Edgecombe County. Hugh (October 24, 1845-August 7, 1919) was raised in Duplin County, and first came to Happy Home in 1882 from Caldwell County. He was a good practicing Methodist as was his wife, who had been Miss Katherine Glover Mobley of South Carolina. Hugh for many years was superintendent of the Methodist Sunday School, and his wife was long the church organist. Hugh spent most of his business career in mercantile activities, being clerk and manager in Connelly Springs stores. Two of his sons, Alex and Sam, caught the Western fever in 1897 and went to Indian Territory, where they took up land. It was a great occasion in Connelly Springs when these two young "Westerners" would come back on a visit. On such occasions Coulter would announce to his family: "Alex and Sam Southerland are in from the West." In 1898 Hugh visited his sons and clerked in a store in Minco for some months.

Also from Scotland (Perthshire) came Daniel F. Stewart (September 26, 1821-November 29, 1891). He migrated first to Canada, where he was married, and later he continued to Happy Home, North Carolina. He died in 1891 and was buried in the Rutherford College Cemetery. His daughter Jessie M., born in Canada, January 11, 1862, had preceded her father to the grave by seven years, having died August 1, 1884. Daniel Stewart's son James Alexander had inherited the house which Coulter rented when he came to Connelly Springs, but by that time Stewart had sold his property to Jones Hudson and had moved with his mother to Chapel Hill, to continue his education, which he had begun at Rutherford College. He completed his college education at the National Normal University in Lebanon, Ohio, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1894. Not at that time being permanently separated from Connelly Springs, he gave that place as his address; and thus he was the first college graduate to come out of Connelly Springs. He later made his home in Minco, Indian Territory, where he set up a mercantile business. (J. Harley Goode, a son of D. P. Goode, was the next person from Connelly Springs to

enter college, going to Trinity College [Duke University] for one year, 1899-1900. The records of Rutherford College, nearby, having been lost in a fire, that institution is not being taken into consideration here, though it did grant degrees at that time).

Another well-established family in Connelly Springs when Coulter moved there were the J. M. ("Mort") Sideses. Coulter had already had business dealings with him and would long continue. Sides had interests in Mitchell County and for a few years during the late 1890's he lived in this mountain county at Ingalls. In 1917 he was struck by a passenger train at the crossing in front of his home, and from injuries he received, he died. Sides was part of the great Connelly clan through his marriage to Lizzie, a daughter of William L. Connelly. Sides was later married twice more.

Another old Connelly Springs family was headed by D. P. Goode, a merchant, a millman, a Methodist preacher at times, and a brave Confederate veteran. Also he was a member of the Connelly clan, having married Louise, another daughter of William L. Connelly.

One of his sons, Horace Connelly Goode (August 12, 1874-January 1, 1961), was a young man of 18 when Coulter moved to Connelly Springs and first came to know him. Horace was a mechanical genius, who had a long and successful career as a shopman and manufacturer of specialties such as wheelbarrows, porch swings, harvesting cradles ("Connelly Springs Reapers"), and also wagons and buggies. A letterhead of H. C. Goode & Co. (G. W. Aiken being the other member of the company) noted: "Makers of Handmade Wagons and Wheelbarrows and Manufacturers of Bent Rimming, Plow Handles and Hubs. Also Dealers in Lumber, Shingles and Laths." In 1901, a news dispatch said that Horace Goode "a very worthy young gentleman with marked mechanical talent" had married Daisy Glass, "one of the prettiest girls along the sweeps of the Catawba." When automobiles first appeared he did not buy one; he made himself one. He used to insist that he had perfected a perpetual motion machine, but he later gave up the idea. Fearless as a man, for many years he was one of the "pillars" in the business life of Connelly Springs and of the Democratic Party of Burke County—the last of the Connelly clan, which had so long played a prominent part in the life of the village.

Horace W. Connelly, after the death of his brother William W. Connelly in 1892, continued as the most prominent of the Connelly tribe in Connelly Springs (though living for a time in Morganton). Coulter had many business dealings with him before he moved from over in the "Nation," as well as afterwards. Connelly during the last



year of his life bought the Connelly Springs Hotel and ran it. After a few years of bad health he died in 1905.

One of Lucy Ann Coulter's most cherished and valued neighbors was "Aunt Lum," the wife of "Uncle Lum" (Columbus W. Abernethy), who was one of the early settlers and extensive landholders of Connelly Springs. When the railroad removed its gravity line for filling its water tank, and installed a pumping station on Cold Water Creek where it ran under the railroad through a culvert, Uncle Lum became head of pumping operations. He was a constant reader of the *Charlotte Observer*, and whenever the train missed bringing it, he was greatly put out of humor. His son Ed was a farmer, road builder, and manager of public works.

Two ladies who became fast friends of Lucy Ann's were Miss Ann McGalliard and her sister Mrs. Corpening ("Copenny" to those who knew no better). They lived by themselves in a neatly-painted white house, with a small front porch and another on the second story; and just across the Morganton road was the Methodist parsonage. Lucy Ann enjoyed having them come up for dinner and spend the day.

Other neighbors of the Coulters after they had moved from the Stewart Place to their own house on "Huckleberry Street," a road leading across the South Mountains, were the William Ennis family (with Bob, a son, long a workman and associate of Coulter's) and J. W. Dorsey (Joe), living on the road farther toward the mountains. Elmer, a son, was a great friend of the Coulter children and they were sorry to see the Dorseys move to Rutherfordton.

Families who were to continue for many years to be prominent in the business and social life of the village were the E. Jones Hudsons and the Midas Hudsons—Jones and Midas being brothers. Jones (December 30, 1848-May 16, 1925) moved to Connelly Springs about two years after Coulter came, and as previously noted, he bought the Stewart Place, immediately before Coulter moved in. The Hudsons were part of that migration to the Catawba River Valley, of an excellent type of settlers, whose social and business interests gravitated to Connelly Springs. Daniel Pinckney (July 20, 1875-August 23, 1928), a son of Jones, became one of the principal merchants of the village, with a little time out in 1905 when some Yankee promoters of "Red Top Snuff" induced Pink to become traveling agent for this snuff, which had a strong birch-bark flavor. Another son, Jones Edna (July 16, 1886-April 8, 1952) was also a merchant of Connelly Springs, being present in his establishment always except when acting as telegrapher and depot agent for the Southern Railroad. Fred, a son of Midas



Hudson, also for many years ran a general store in the village, and his brother Edmund was the postmaster in the 1950's and 1960's.

John D. Cassels (September 23, 1848-September 7, 1938) was another one of those Catawba River Valley settlers. His house was near the ferry across the river, which was later replaced by a bridge and this bridge was being superceded by a better one in 1961-1962. His daughter Jeanette was married to Lee Goode, a brother of Horace. Though he never moved away from his river home, he was a frequent visitor in Connelly Springs and was a good friend of Coulter's. He was a great power in the Democratic Party of Burke, and any political meeting in Lovelady Township not attended by John Cassels was to be remarked at.

Another outstanding Catawba River Valley family was headed by John D. Glass (November 24, 1830-October 5, 1905), who chose to live his life in the old homestead, but he was much in Connelly Springs, and his daughter Daisy married Horace Goode, as before stated. His son J. Weber Glass (October 16, 1872-August 21, 1950) was associated for a time around 1904 in the lumber business with Coulter under the firm name of "Glass & Coulter. Manufacturers and Dealers in Rough and Finished Lumber, Laths and Shingles, Flour, Meal, Farm Implements, White Hickory Wagons a Specialty. Breeders of Thoroughbred Essex and Berkshire Hogs, Angora Goats and Guernsey and Holstein Cattle." All of this business except lumber was in fact Coulter's alone. Another son Theodore also had large lumber and shingle dealings with Coulter.

The Lutheran preacher for the scattered flock of eastern Burke and Caldwell was David A. Goodman, also a resident of the Catawba River Valley. Later he moved to Connelly Springs.

Living to the northward of Connelly Springs, but not quite in the Catawba River Valley was Jessie Cook (January 4, 1857-September 29, 1942). He ran a mill on Cold Water Creek, turned by an overshot wheel, fed by water from a race leading from "Jessie Cook's Mill Pond," a favorite spot for picnics and swimming. Jessie took as his second wife Clara Abernethy, a daughter of Uncle and Aunt Lum. Among the other families tributary to Connelly Springs, living to the northward but not in the Valley were Cyrus P. ("Cy") Ballew (June 16, 1816-July, 1902) and other Ballews, Ham and John. Farther down this creek nearer its junction with the Catawba River lived the Hamlens, whose land Coulter bought and always referred to it as the "Hamlen Place." A pond here provided water power for a mill and was always called "Lail's Mill Pond," suggesting that in this region north of Connelly Springs there lived some of the Lail clan.

Only a mile or two south and southwest of Connelly Springs began

the foothills of the South Mountains (sometimes on old maps called the Montague Mountains). An outlying protrusion of these mountains directly east of the village was Hoosiers Knob, and on the southwest the highest point was High Peak. Across these mountains and in them, too, lived families who did much of their trading in Connelly Springs, bringing apples, chestnuts, tan bark, and other products of mountain fields and woodlands. Alex Hilderbrand (June 6, 1852-August 4, 1905) lived in a cove surrounded by these mountains on all sides except the east, his fields and apple orchards extending to the tops of some of them. He would come across the mountains with a load of tan bark, his wagon wheels squeaking with too little tar to lubricate them, and when he neared town (he never gave up calling it Icard) he would halt in front of the Coulter residence and give the children red limbertwigs or a pocket full of chestnuts. Alex was uneducated, but he was a wholesome dependable citizen. A story often told on him, which may not have been true, related to a discussion of paper money: "Alex, do you know money? Of course, I know money. Alex, what is this [showing him a one-dollar bill]? That's a sixteen-dollar bill; my Uncle Dan Burns had minny-a sixteen-dollar bill." Other families who lived in the northside foothills, in, or across the mountains, were the Burnses, Ogles, Huffmans, Speagles, Shoups, Lails, Robinsons, Cranfords, and Taylors.

Living about two miles west of Connelly Springs was the Harvey McGalliard family with their children John Calvin (April 20, 1875-November 30, 1933), Theodore, and Sally. Like the two Southerland boys, Cal and Theo left for the West in the same year that the Southerlands went to Indian Territory. The McGalliards got only as far as Missouri and soon decided to return. Cal married Jennie Hudson, a daughter of Jones, and became a merchant in the village. Theo moved to Chapel Hill. Farther to the west lived George A. Hauss (July 31, 1852-December 3, 1945), a citizen the like of whom was too seldom to be found, a schoolmaster, a merchant, a rural letter carrier, a sage. He and Coulter grew to be great chums in their old age. In the Hauss neighborhood (later to be known as "Hauss Ridge") lived W. J. G. Cranford, who had a midget son Pat; Perry Bumgartner; and Perry Bollinger, a justice of the peace for those parts. To go farther west would encroach on the village of Valdese, which is a special subject in itself.

South and west of Connelly Springs also lived David W. Lowman (February 8, 1869-January 24, 1950), a man of many interests including the license to preach, a facile tongue, a hunter-fancier of hound dogs, a Republican. Dave married a daughter of Sylvanus Deal (November 1, 1832-July 30, 1899) and raised a large and re-



spectable family. Sylvanus Deal had been a Confederate soldier who in the company of other Tar Heels, fired with the laudable desire to be at home, without leave, left the war before it was over. For this precipitancy they were mercifully pardoned by President Jefferson Davis after having been sentenced to death by a court-martial. Deal became a leader in his community, a big landowner from whom Coulter bought many acres, a merchant and property owner in Connelly Springs. Another important family clan in this region was the Abees. Jefferson ("Jeff") Abee (December 28, 1852-October 29, 1924) was outstanding among the Abees, being a merchant in whose firm Coulter became a member. Philip ("Phil") Icard of the Icards could take pride in the fact that Icard Station had been named for his tribe. Without treading on the toes of the village of Rutherford College, the Griffins should be included in those tributary to Connelly Springs. The Griffin brothers, W. L. ("Bill"), Joseph F. ("Joe") (December 6, 1861-July 21, 1954), and Theodore (Theo) (October 10, 1869-June 11, 1932) were not only excellent brick masons and brick makers, but also equally prominent as music makers, fiddlers, and banjo-pickers. They operated under the firm name of W. L. Griffin & Co.

East of the depot down the railroad track about a half mile lived Joseph E. (Joe) Berry (September 12, 1858-January 13, 1942). He was the railroad section foreman for many years, keeping the track in good order. He joined the Mormon Church and developed the habit of going to Utah to live. By 1901 he had gone there three times, but three times he had returned; and the railroad company obligingly kept open his position of foreman, well knowing that he loved his railroad section more than Utah and enjoyed working his Negro men (Cornelius and Bill Jenkins and others) and at the end of the day riding home on the section car powered by these same Negroes working up and down the handle bars. Joe raised a large family. Two of his boys (Charley and Frank) caught by the Western fever from being exposed to Utah, went West. Charley after a few years faded into oblivion, and Frank was killed in a sleighing accident in Pocatello, Idaho. One of Joe's daughters, Nona, married Gib Perkins, who lived in the regions east of Connelly Springs. Among others of the Perkins tribe were Doc and Cleveland.

Eli Taylor, Sr. (1805-1893) lived about three miles east of Connelly Springs. He was famed as a tobacco farmer. In 1888 he cleared \$100 an acre on his tobacco. He left a family of three sons and six daughters. His son Eli also raised tobacco. Coulter bought tobacco from him in 1894 at 23 cents a pound.

At a certain time of the year as the sun swung northward and



southward with the seasons, any of the Coulter's up early could see it rise through the "Mart Lowman Gap" in the hills to the eastward. Mart, a Confederate veteran and a longtime workman of Coulter's, lived beyond that gap. A little farther on to the east lived Poley Townsend, distantly related to Coulter. The Coulter children during one year in their schooling passed by Poley's house on their way to the Drowning Creek Schoolhouse. They never forgot the wonderful yellow sweet-apples with which Poley invited them to fill their pockets and bellies.

Farther on down the road lived Reuben (Rube) Morgan, a man of substance and importance in his community, who enjoyed sitting in Coulter's office whether he had business to transact or not. He greatly enjoyed the soothing effects of whiskey, though he adhered to the slogan: "The Lord in His wisdom made fools both great and small—big fools drink too much, and little fools not at all."

Eli Martin owned Hoosiers Knob and lived at the foot of it. He died on February 14, 1899 and left it to his widow. The story was told on a Martin boy, that on one occasion when he had a puncture of his bicycle tire, he said he could fix it if someone would get him a needle and thread. In 1897 it was being rumored that George Vanderbilt who had been buying land around Asheville as early as 1889 and who had completed his famous Biltmore House in 1895, was now interested in buying Hoosiers Knob to be used for the site of a resort hotel, and that he had offered \$5,000 for it. The rumor may have been groundless, but later the story grew up that Martin refused to sell because the purchase would take in his calf pasture where old "Buck" was grazing, leaving "Buck" no place to go.

Others who lived to the eastward of Connelly Springs were George and Joe Aiken (and Bill and Avery) who were the best blacksmiths for many miles around. Then farther over toward the Catawba River lived W. W. (Waits) Aiken, who ran a country store and who did much business with Coulter, selling him country produce, especially peas. Also in this general region lived the Zimmermans, Glazebrooks, Childers, Ingles, Pages, Fowlers, Knoxes, Watsons, and the Silas and Henderson Berrys.

No Negroes lived in Connelly Springs, though there was a settlement of them in the Shady Grove neighborhood with their church Israel's Chapel. ("High Day" at Israel's Chapel was their way of announcing special occasions for praising and shouting and for converting the wayward). George Johnson was one of their leaders, important enough to be a preacher when not busied working for Coulter. Also there were families of colored Connellys, Jenkinses, Erwinses, Michers (Michaeux), and Wallaces. A few families lived to the westward,

principally the Reeses and the McGalliards. Most of them, men and women, looked to Connelly Springs for their subsistence.

All of the foregoing were some of the people who lived in and around Connelly Springs when Coulter moved there. With a few of them he had already had business dealings. Others he would soon know through social and economic contacts. In the course of time additional families would be moving in, just as Coulter had done in 1892, to play their part in the development of the village and region round about. And some would move away and scatter as the Dorseys, the Gunters, and the Connelys.

## CHAPTER VI

### MERCHANT

FOR more than a half dozen years Coulter had been engaging in merchandising as one of his enterprises over in the "Nation," and it was to be that he would continue for a decade after he moved to Connelly Springs. Even before he announced "J. E. Coulter & Co.," Millstone, N. C., with Sanford Cline as a partner, he was using a letterhead of "J. E. Coulter & Company," which presumably did not include Sanford as the other part of the company, but it is not known who filled the place. This letterhead was being used as early as January, 1890, and included these details: "Manufacturers of Dressed & Undressed Lumber and Heart Pine Shingles. Dealers in General Merchandise, and Agents for Grain Drills, Road Carts and Piedmont Wagons." And it carried this interesting information: "Post Office and Shipping Point Connelly Springs, Burke County, North Carolina." But even in an earlier letterhead being used in 1888 and probably earlier (details of which were quoted in Chapter V) and being entitled only "J. E. Coulter," the location was given, "Connellys Springs, Burke Co., N. C." And in the "In Account with J. E. Coulter" part of this stationery, these further details of his business were given: "Manufacturer of all kinds of Rough and Finished Building Material, Sawed Heart-Pine Shingles, Goods and Tobacco Boxes, Picket Palings, Feed and Bread Meal.—Orders Respectfully Solicited and Promptly filled. Dealer in General Merchandise and Country Produce, &c. And Agent for the Celebrated Piedmont Wagon, Buggies, Carts, Grain Drills, Sawmills, &c."

But it is pretty evident that Coulter had no actual business establishments in Connelly Springs until he moved there in 1892. But after arriving it took him little time to become a partner not only in a merchandising firm but also in the mill business. He became a member of "D. P. Goode & Co., Dealers in General Merchandise, Country



Produce, &c." The other member besides Goode and Coulter was J. M. Sides. This company soon dissolved, and there emerged "Sides & Coulter," also trading as "J. M. Sides & Co." Added to "Dealers in General Merchandise" were these details: "Manufacturers and Dealers in All Kinds of Rough and Finished Building Material, Heart Pine Sawed Shingles and Laths. Agent for Piedmont and Spach Wagons, All Kinds of Machinery, Fertilizers, etc." Notable are the additions of Spach wagons and fertilizers. In this company, Sides was president and Coulter was secretary and treasurer. On August 1, 1894 Coulter bought out Sides, and now it became "J. E. Coulter, Successor to D. P. Goode & Co., and J. M. Sides & Co.," with the remainder of the letterhead being almost the same as for the old company.

On November 6, 1897 Coulter's first great business misfortune befell him; his store burned up. By dangerous and heroic efforts his account books (eleven in all), were saved, but the tops of them were consumed—an additional misfortune, since the names of the debtors were burned off as well as some of the items for which they owed. The only bright spot about these charred records was the fact that the index with the page numbers of their accounts was mostly intact, and by restoring the page numbers, the names of most of the debtors could be determined.

Letters of consolation came in from all sides. George E. Nissen & Company of Winston-Salem wrote, "We regret very much to know of your loss by fire. You are fortunate to have the insurance and trust you will not have any trouble to collect it." Oliver D. Revell, a lumber dealer of Asheville, wrote, "I am awfully sorry about the fire. I hope you are insured well and be smart or the companies will get you. I had a fire once and they will beat you in the adjustment every time." An Ohio firm said, "We are very sorry to learn that you have been burned out." Adolphus Blair & Sons of Richmond, Virginia, expressed their sorrow and added that in all their dealings "with you we have always found you correct." The Dr. Harter Medicine Company of Dayton, Ohio, famous for their "Little Liver Pills" and their "Wild Cherry Bitters," deducted \$17.38 from their account against Coulter.

It was difficult to determine the exact loss; but Hugh Southerland, who was in Minco, Indian Territory, at the time of the fire, had taken an inventory of the stock the preceding summer, and it was his guess that the total loss amounted to \$5,000 or \$6,000. Coulter estimated that his insurance would be at least \$1,800; but for some reason he got only \$425, probably bearing out Revell's prediction. The insurers were the Virginia Fire and Marine Insurance Company of Richmond, Virginia.

This business tragedy seemed to put Coulter back where he was before he had gone to the "Nation" to begin his career. Willing to start anew with nothing in order to play fair with all his creditors, he went before the proper county officials and recorded a document assigning all his property to a trustee. Coulter "being embarrassed in business mainly by reason of his losses by fire, and being indebted to various and sundry persons and being desirous to secure the same has hereby bargained, sold and conveyed to John T. Perkins Trustee [a Morganton lawyer] . . . all my property whatsoever," including about 300 acres, a town lot in Morganton, his lumber, laths, and shingles, and \$1,800 insurance. He exempted his homestead and \$500 of personal property to be valued by three justices of the peace to be named by Perkins. Preferred debtors were to be Trustee Perkins, for his commission; a debt of \$30.00 to Mrs. Julia A. Huitt, his mother-in-law; a debt of \$100 to Philip Augustus Coulter, his father; a note of \$200 held by the First National Bank of Hickory; \$190 owed Shuford Hardware Company of Hickory; \$90.00 due E. L. Shuford; \$250 due D. P. Hudson, a Connelly Springs merchant; all wages due his hired hands; \$15.00 owed Geo. W. Hall; and \$100 to D. P. Goode. "All other just debts and amounts prorata."

Perkins entered onto his task of settling Coulter's indebtedness according to these stipulations. After some time, Coulter was very strongly advised by J. T. Pearson, another Morganton lawyer, to "take the bankruptcy act." He said "yours is peculiarly one whose only remedy is the Bankruptcy Court." When Perkins should wind up his assigneeship, Pearson continued, "you will have a balance on all your debts hanging over you for life. By going into Bankruptcy you have a clean record and owe no man anything. You surrender all your property and give an inventory of it. You give a list of all your creditors, amount of their debt and their PO address." The court would then appoint a trustee, who would mark out the homestead and pro-rate the assets among the creditors. When this trustee should be appointed, then Perkins would turn over to him all of Coulter's remaining assets.

It is not known whether or not Coulter took Pearson's advice and "took the bankruptcy act," but very soon he was back in business—not as "J. E. Coulter" but "J. E. Coulter & Co." Apart from the necessity of bringing in operational capital, this was an expression of Coulter's lifelong proclivity of associating himself with others in some of his business activities. The letterhead of "J. E. Coulter & Co." was the same as that of "J. E. Coulter," except for the addition of the agency for "Nissen Wagons." Coulter's brother Frank was the other member of the company, with John Ellis holding down his



customary position of secretary and treasurer. Within a short time another member was added to the company (if only for a short time); he was Benjamin Abernethy, who was destined to continue throughout Coulter's lifetime and on beyond in the business world of Connelly Springs and as Southern Railway depot agent and telegrapher. In fact Ben seems to have been a partner in this Company only momentarily, for all in the year 1898, the Company had been organized and dissolved, and Ben had set up as an independent merchant, dealing in fertilizers, lumber, and wagons.

"J. E. Coulter & Co." was succeeded by "J. E. Coulter, Agent." He now added to his mill business "Dealer in Hardware, Agricultural Implements, Agent for Geo. E. Nissen, Spach, and Hand-made Wagons [a product of H. C. Goode's shop], Pivoted Axle Wagons. Disc Plows a Specialty. Patentee of Bicycle Propulsion. Also Dealer in General Merchandise." On another letterhead of the same period emphasizing his mill business, he added items which would engage his attention as long as he remained in any business and would finally be his only business: "Also High Grade Fertilizers, Phosphates, Etc." (A discussion of his "Bicycle Propulsion" patent will appear later).

"J. E. Coulter, Agent," was to continue in fact, whether or not so noted on any letterhead, as long as he was in business; but this fact did not prevent him from associating himself in a company. In May, 1899 there was a Connelly Springs mercantile firm known as "Abee & Deal," the partners being J. P. Abee and Sylvanus Deal, whose storehouse and all its contents burned up. Two months later Deal died, and Abee decided to continue in the business in the organization of a company known as "J. P. Abee & Co." This company was formed August 11, 1899, to continue for one year, with J. P. Abee, J. E. Coulter, and A. L. Lefevers as co-partners, every one putting into the firm \$136, with profits to be divided equally. At the end of the one-year period, Lefevers, who was interested in merchandising in the nearby village of Rutherford College, withdrew, and Hugh Southerland became associated as manager at a salary of \$20.00 a month. Supposedly J. P. Abee was the president, and, of course, J. E. Coulter held down his specialties, the secretaryship and the treasurership. Southerland in addition to being the salaried manager was a member of the firm. Learning from past experience, Coulter, who through his position was in charge of collections, devised a special form to be sent out to all customers indebted to the company, a facsimile of which appears opposite page ????

But with all of Coulter's skill or lack of skill in making collections, the company after two years was forced to the wall. The following document composed by Coulter explained the situation: "Connelly



Springs, N. C., Aug. 25, 1902. To the Creditors of J. P. Abee & Co., and Whomsoever it may Concern:

"We, J. P. Abee, H. Southerland and J. E. Coulter trading as J. P. Abee & Co., doing a General Merchandising business make the following statement:

"Being financially embarrassed in business and it being our heart-felt desire and honest purpose to pay our friends who so kindly extended us credit their money in full, and while we could assign or go into bankruptcy yet rather than accept this lawful plan we prefer to and have sold our entire stock of merchandise to George A. Miller and O. M. Yoder for cost. J. P. Abee and J. E. Coulter giving them as an inducement two years storehouse rent free by getting 100 cents on the dollar. We will be able to settle with our creditors, whereas if we had gone into bankruptcy and claimed a homestead as the law allows our creditors would not have received over 50 cents on the dollar, if that, but J. E. Coulter waives his homestead and exemption and surrenders all, and J. P. Abee and H. Southerland waive their homestead as to this stock of goods and only claim a homestead outside the stock of merchandise, and J. E. Coulter and J. P. Abee have never withdrawn any of their stock and have payed their accounts in full. H. Southerland owes an account of about \$275. which he says he cant pay. J. E. Coulter has been elected trustee by the Company for the creditors and he has accepted and will honestly pay over to the creditors as their just interests may appear all moneys coming into his hands and will use all means to collect the outstanding accounts and will take the necessary oath for the faithful discharge of his duties, or if the creditors desire will give bond in any bond Company they may designate at their expense.

The stock of goods inventure \$2021.90; the book accounts to \$ . . . . the liabilities amount to \$ . . . . G. A. Miller and O. M. Yoder executed notes and mortgages as follows: Dec. 11, 1902 \$500; Jan. 1, 1903 \$100; April 1, 1903 \$150; July 1, 1903 \$150; Oct. 1, 1903 \$100; Jan. 1, 1904 \$150; April 1, 1904 \$150; July 1, 1904 \$250; Aug. 25, 1904 \$471.90. The creditors and the amounts due them will be found on the reverse side." (The form document not yet sent out, of course, had nothing entered on the reverse side).

Despite Coulter's efforts to be scrupulously honest in settling up the business of "J. P. Abee & Co.," after about two years, on April 11, 1904, the United States District Court declared it in bankruptcy, and appointed W. S. Pearson the referee. On August 2nd following, the bankruptcy was discharged. From this time on, Coulter stayed out of the general merchandising business, though he was long to sell staple products, but only as a commission merchant or middleman.

Hereafter his dealings with general merchants was as a customer (he and his family), and through giving orders on the various Connelly Springs merchants, to allow his workmen to make purchases for stated accounts. Coulter would later pay the merchants and subtract the amounts from his workmen's wages. These orders were written on a special form designed for that purpose, unless such form was not at hand, in which case Coulter would write out the order on any scrap of paper available.

When Coulter had been in the general mercantile business, he rented his storehouse (sometimes for \$7.00 a month), or had a part ownership of the building, or was sole owner. He and Abee built the storehouse used by "J. P. Abee & Co." Some of the carpenters and other workmen who built it were Logan Abernethy, Poley Townsend, John Deal, Avery Ledford, and Mart Lowman. Although no longer a merchant, Coulter continued to have an interest in Connelly Springs storehouses. In 1904 he paid \$400 for a half interest in a storehouse, which had formerly been owned by H. W. Connelly. In 1908 Coulter insured a storehouse for \$800, which he sold the next year to Henry L. Vanstory for \$1,000. He bought back this building in 1913 for \$1,375 and three years later sold it to Calvin McGalliard, for \$1,550.

Among the merchants of Connelly Springs who came and went, from around the turn of the century were: Miller & Wilson (John Miller and C. L. Wilson), Miller & Miller (John Miller and George A. Miller), Daniel Pinckney Hudson, B. B. Abernethy, L. M. Hull, Miller & Yoder (George A. Miller and O. M. Yoder), George A. Miller, Kistler & Hauss (H. F. Kistler and George A. Hauss), L. M. Brower (1855-1912), Henry L. Vanstory, David W. Alexander (1884-1959), Alphonzo H. ("Pete") Abernethy, J. E. Hudson & Company (J. Edna Hudson and Fred Hudson), and Fred Hudson. By 1960 there was not a general merchant in all Connelly Springs (all that was left)—only a furniture store.

Excepting D. P. Hudson, the merchant who continued longest in the business was D. P. Goode. Back in the 1880's he was merchandising under the firm name of Goode & Deal, then D. P. Goode & Company, Goode and Hudson, and finally D. P. Goode. In 1900 he sold out to L. M. Hull and moved away to Patterson Springs down in Cleveland County. But soon he was back to live out the rest of his life in Connelly Springs and the nearby village of Rutherford College.

Merchants from the Coulter period on down sold almost entirely on credit, a practice which resulted in many uncollected accounts. On one occasion D. P. Hudson sought to spur collections by offering



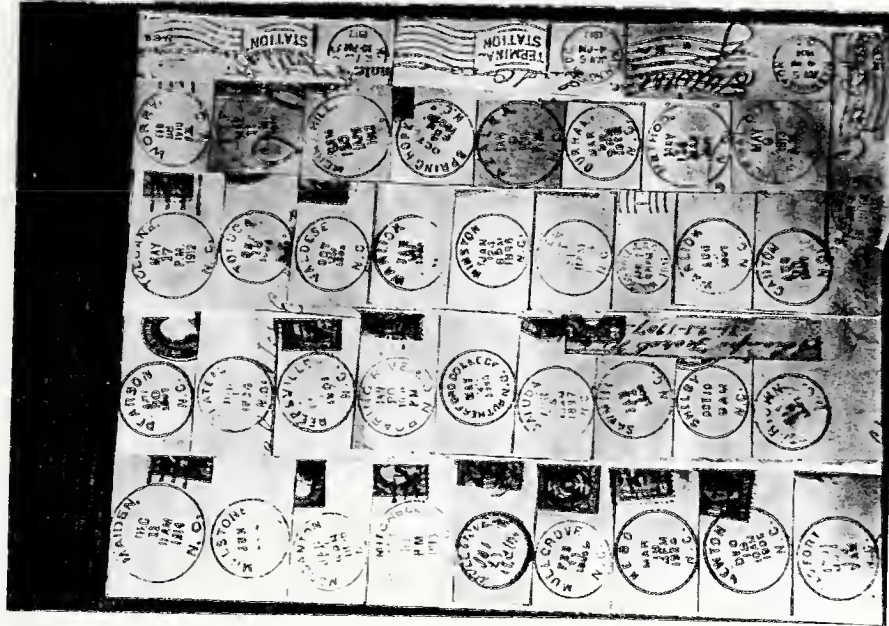
a Piedmont wagon as a prize to the lucky drawer in a contest which could be participated in only by customers who paid their accounts during the subsequent ninety days.

The chief suppliers for Coulter's mercantile firms had been: for general merchandise Stebbins, Lawson & Spragins of South Boston, Virginia; Guggenheimer & Company of Lynchburg, Virginia; and the Baltimore Bargain House—for groceries, Adolphus Blair & Sons of Richmond, Virginia—for hardware, Shuford Hardware Company of Hickory; Morganton Hardware Company; and Frank B. Ingold of Hickory—for boots and shoes, E. L. Shuford of Hickory—and for harness, A. S. Abernethy of Hickory. Coulter bought cider and soda water (no beer) from Augusta Brewing Company of Georgia and R. W. Lawson & Company of South Boston, Virginia; grain, hay, and seeds from N. R. Savage & Son of Richmond; and bran, shorts, and flour from Asheville Milling Company.

From his kinsman Levi Plonk of Newton, Coulter bought tobacco, harness, and saddles; he bought sweet potatoes from his brother Claud of Startown; and from his former neighbor Henry Blackburn of Blackburn, Catawba County, he bought crocks, jugs, and other clay ware. Most of his tobacco (plug, twist, and smoking) he bought from the Richmond Tobacco Company; P. Whitlock of Richmond; R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company of Winston (Winston-Salem); Ogburn, Hill & Company of Winston; R. F. Morris & Son of Durham; Irvin & Poston of Statesville; Greene, Rea & Company of Yadkin College; and Shore, Adkins & Company of Kernersville.

There was a special kind of supplier of ready-made clothing whose product appealed to the most countryfied of the country trade because of its cheapness, both in price and quality, the pawnbroker merchant. It is not known how far, if any distance at all, the pawnbroker merchants were able to push their trade with Coulter; but there were at least two who bombarded him with their high-powered advertising leaflets. These were H. Levy & Co. and M. H. Friedman & Co., both of the City of New York. These companies supposedly bought up their supplies from pawnbroker shops. The Levy firm explained that its clothing included articles "which rich men are sometimes compelled to part with"; that its goods were strictly all wool; and that there was "a big demand for such goods among the working classes and colored people." It announced these prices: men's suits, \$3.00 "& up"; Prince Albert coats, \$1.25 and up; boys' suits, \$2.50 and up; and other wearing apparel at corresponding prices. Friedman apparently had his competitor Levy in mind when he composed his folder: "We give you our exact prices and will not tell you we have goods from such a price and up and then charge you twice as much." Here were some





POSTMARKS OF TOWNS IN WHICH COULTER HAD BUSINESS DEALINGS.

[illegible]

# LETTERHEADS OF COULTER'S BUSINESSES IN CONNELLY SPRINGS.



J. P. ABEER, N. SOUTHERLAND, Mgr. J. E. COULTER, Sec. & Treas.

## J. P. Abbe & Company

DEALERS IN

### Gen'l Merchandise and Country Produce

Chicago, Rough and Finished Lumber and Planing Laths.

Connally Springs, Ill. &c.

180

OR

Our books show balance against

you \$100.00

Interest on \$100.00

at 6% per annum

from Jan 1st 1900

to Jan 1st 1901

\$6.00

Total \$106.00

Trading you and this with your prompt attention and delivery

of goods for part payment, and settling your ledger accounts, we are of

service to you by making for each a journal. Call and be assured.

Very truly, As

J. P. ABEER & COMPANY.

LEAVES.

J. E. COULTER, AGT.	
No. 100	
Date: Dec 1st 1900	
To: J. P. Abbe & Company	
For: Balance forward	
\$106.00	
Total \$106.00	
J. E. COULTER, AGT.	

## GLASS & COULTER

Manufacturers of Glass and Lumber, Laths and Shingles, Planing, Milling, Gaging, Impregnating, and other work in connection with the above. Also, a full line of hardware, cutlery, and other goods.

Connally Springs, N. S. & Treas.

J. E. COULTER, AGT.

ROUGH AND FINISHED BUILDING MATERIAL.

HEAD, MEAL, AND FINE STUFF.

YELLOW PINE, WHITE PINE, HARD PINE, AND

ALL KINDS OF LUMBER, LATHS, AND SHINGLES.

Also, a full line of hardware, cutlery, and other goods.

Connally Springs, N. S. & Treas.

J. E. COULTER & CO.

ALL KINDS OF LUMBER, LATHS, AND SHINGLES.

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J. E. COULTER & CO.

ALL KINDS OF LUMBER, LATHS, AND SHINGLES.

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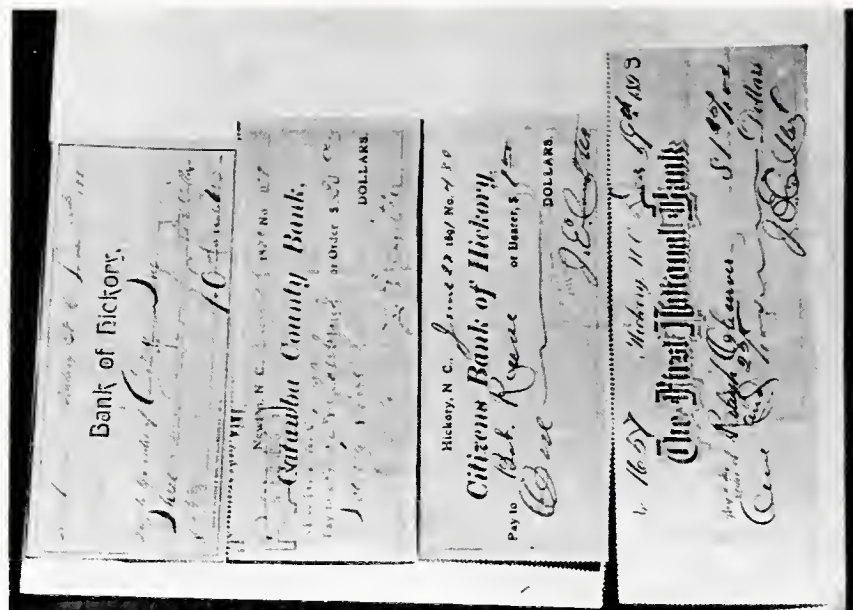
**J. E. COULTER, Agent.**  
**Rough and Finished Building Material, Heart Sued Yellow and White Pine Shingles, Laths, FLOUR AND MEAL.**  
**Nelson & Smith Wagons, Blows, and Agricultural Implements - Machinery.**  
 Also all kinds of building materials and supplies.

*Prices for 1893.*

1/2" x 4" x 10' Yellow Pine Lumber	1/2" x 4" x 10' White Pine Lumber	1/2" x 4" x 10' Heart Sued Yellow Pine Lumber	1/2" x 4" x 10' White Pine Shingles
1/2" x 4" x 10' Yellow Pine Laths	1/2" x 4" x 10' White Pine Laths	1/2" x 4" x 10' Heart Sued Yellow Pine Laths	1/2" x 4" x 10' White Pine Laths
1/2" x 4" x 10' Yellow Pine FLOUR	1/2" x 4" x 10' White Pine FLOUR	1/2" x 4" x 10' Heart Sued Yellow Pine FLOUR	1/2" x 4" x 10' White Pine FLOUR
1/2" x 4" x 10' Yellow Pine MEAL	1/2" x 4" x 10' White Pine MEAL	1/2" x 4" x 10' Heart Sued Yellow Pine MEAL	1/2" x 4" x 10' White Pine MEAL
1/2" x 4" x 10' Yellow Pine Machinery	1/2" x 4" x 10' White Pine Machinery	1/2" x 4" x 10' Heart Sued Yellow Pine Machinery	1/2" x 4" x 10' White Pine Machinery
1/2" x 4" x 10' Yellow Pine Blows	1/2" x 4" x 10' White Pine Blows	1/2" x 4" x 10' Heart Sued Yellow Pine Blows	1/2" x 4" x 10' White Pine Blows
1/2" x 4" x 10' Yellow Pine Agricultural Implements	1/2" x 4" x 10' White Pine Agricultural Implements	1/2" x 4" x 10' Heart Sued Yellow Pine Agricultural Implements	1/2" x 4" x 10' White Pine Agricultural Implements
1/2" x 4" x 10' Yellow Pine Wagons	1/2" x 4" x 10' White Pine Wagons	1/2" x 4" x 10' Heart Sued Yellow Pine Wagons	1/2" x 4" x 10' White Pine Wagons

**J. E. COULTER, Agent.**

Left: BLANK QUOTATION SHEET, USED DURING THE 1890's. Right: CHECKS GIVEN BY COULTER, 1883-1893.



of his prices: men's coats, 75¢, \$1.00, \$1.25, \$1.50, \$1.75, and \$2.00; men's pants at the same prices; Prince Albert coats, \$1.00, \$1.25, \$1.50, \$1.75, \$2.00, and \$2.50; prices of other items, accordingly. Coulter became sufficiently interested to have his kinsman Sid J. Smyre, who lived in New York, to inspect the wares of M. Silver, another dealer in pawnbroker clothing.

What Coulter's stores over in the "Nation" sold and what his stores in Connelly Springs thereafter sold were, of course, much the same; but it should be expected that the clientele in Connelly Springs would have a little more sophistication and call for a slightly higher grade of goods and a wider variety. As for what the elite families of Connelly Springs were buying at their village stores about the beginning of the twentieth century, a list of purchases by the Coulters (including the children) should give an insight into what the family thought it needed for the household and for businesses outside: rice, flour, ginger, sugar, soda, eggs, fish, lemons, oranges, bananas, oat meal, cabbage, bread, sweet corn, canned peaches, sardines, crackers, candy, lemonade, coffee, potatoes, butter, ginger snaps, chewing gum, flavoring extracts, sausage, fruit powders, breakfast bacon, chipped beef, sarsaparilla, cordials, castor oil, dyspepsia tablets, black draught, dye (for Easter eggs, no doubt), kerosene oil, lamp chimneys, buckets, gold dust, pencils, day books, shoe polish, pie pans, oil cans, flower vases, dippers, turnip seeds, matches, brooms, cloth (alamance and other kinds), tuck combs, suspenders, stockings, thread, shoe strings, horse shoes, mule shoes, files (rat-tail, handsaw, and others), axle grease, belt hooks, bolts, plows, leather, nails (horseshoe, shingle, ten-penny, shoe, and others), hame strings, rope, stock food, shorts (wheat bran with some of the ground grain included), plow handles, clevises, rosin, gate hinges, rivets, rawhide, and axe handles.

For dress goods and other clothing for men, women, and children Lucy Ann made her trips regularly to Hickory, ten miles away, each way requiring two hours of steady driving her favorite gentle horse. There she patronized her favorite merchants and special clerks (never liking to trade with a woman clerk). She would trade with none other than men.

The children made frequent visits to the Connelly Springs stores, where their chief purchases were candy, ginger snaps, oranges, and bananas. A celebrated occasion in the Coulter family history was when one of the youngsters asked for a dollar's worth of candy, as he proudly displayed in payment a one-cent piece, and on receiving his candy he was asked by the clerk if he wanted a receipt. The youngster not knowing what a receipt was accepted it, and later on attempting to use the receipt for another "dollar's worth of candy,"

he found out that it "would not spend." But anyway he kept the receipt a long time as a souvenir of an important mercantile transaction.

Much of the candy in the Connelly Springs stores came in great barrels, and was made up of a variety of gum and hard pieces of various flavors (lemon, orange, cream, and so on). There was licorice, which children generally did not like very well; but also there was horehound, which they did like and which was considered good for colds. The Coulter children now and then would seem to have had colds in order to get a stick of horehound candy. Rock candy, crystallized around a string in the middle, was a favorite because it was too hard to chew and had to be allowed to melt in the mouth, thus being somewhat like the "all-day suckers," which were pieces of hard candy on the end of small sticks.

Some items not included in the Coulter purchases mentioned above, but extensively sold in the stores, were the products of the hog: short ribs ( $6\frac{1}{2}$  cents a pound), fat back ( $5\frac{1}{2}$  cents a pound), sugar-cured ham ( $11\frac{1}{2}$  cents a pound), pickled pig feet (3 cents each), and pork sausage (8 cents a pound). The Coulters had their own swine and their smokehouse, which contained meats more tasty than what could be bought at stores.

Some other items never found on the list of purchases by the Coulters were snuff and tobacco. Coulter was strongly opposed to the use of tobacco "in any shape or form." Yet his store sold much of it, for he was not out to reform his fellowman in this respect. There was tobacco for dipping (snuff), for smoking (cigars, cheroots, and cigarettes), and for chewing (plugs and twists, the twists often called "pig-tail tobacco"). The favorite snuff was Sweet Scotch, a must for most of the Negro women. There were various brands of cigarettes, selling for as little as five cents a pack, and one of the most popular was Steamboat, but Piedmont was not far behind. Other brands were Home Run and Sweet Corporal. No cigar or cheroot could compare with Old Virginia Cheroots, in the light blue pack picturing in a circle in the center an old ante-bellum darky with his fringe of white hair and scraggly fringe of beard and his six-sided spectacles on his forehead. They were five for ten cents, and were made first by P. Whitlock and later by his successor the American Cigar Company. The favorite cigars were Cremo, Florodora, Primos, and Cubanola—five cents each, and made by the same company.

There were at least 150 brands of smoking tobacco for pipes, but by far the favorites in the Connelly Springs region (and probably the only brands for sale there) were Bull Durham, Duke's Mixture, and some sales of Nigger Head and Plow Boy. These tobaccos were also



rolled into cigarettes by the purchasers, and such cigarettes were sometimes facetiously called "makums." These bags were five cents each.

The common method of consuming tobacco was chewing it, spitting out most of it, but consciously and unconsciously swallowing a little. The number of brands of chewing tobacco fell little short, if any, of the smoking variety. These were the brands which could be found in the Connelly Springs stores at one time or another: Star, Piper Heidsick, Good Luck, Horse Shoe, Battle Ax, Drummond Natural Leaf, Rich and Waxy, Monarch, R. J. R., Schnapps, Strawberry, Early Bird, Apple Jack, O. N. T., Red Elephant, Brown's Mule, Rough & Tough, Annie Rooney, Sweet Belle Mahone, Honey Dip, Gay Bird, Sweet Mash, Musk Melon, Heavy Weight, Sally Jay, Hill Billy, Black Mammy, John's Ox, Bull of the Woods, Horse Apple, Tar Heel, Bill Bailey, Little Marion, Yellow Pine, Our Two Pets, Rock and Rye, Stars and Bars, 16 to 1, Back to Dixie, Little Cuba, Hard to Beat, Cannon Ball, Georgia Melon, Red Ham, Limber Twig, Apple, Cut Short, Ram's Horn, Red Bird, Big Run, Mountain Dew, Old Sol, Red Coon, Buntz Rooster, Old Black Joe, Fat Boy, Boot Black, White Sails--and these were not all.

Of course the Connelly Springs dudes for the most part were smokers, but they did some chewing. These gentlemen were not strictly of the working class, but on occasion when stern necessity required it, they stooped to a little work for wages. They were, however, not steady in such low practices. They were the fast sons of the upper middle class. They made up a very small part of the Connelly Springs population, and were by no means given to committing petty infraction of the law. They might be said to be the only leisure class in the village. Here are the items of purchase found on their store accounts, which were the standard by which dudes were set apart: cider, which came in barrels as well as bottles, and sold for five cents a glass and also in five-cent and ten-cent bottles; soda pop (coming in bottles, of course, with an inside rubber seal, which was released by pushing in a protruding metal gadget); sherbets and milk shakes; pickles, oysters and crackers, bologna sausage, and pickled pig feet; sardines and cheese with crackers; goobers and chestnuts (in season, in the fall); candy, apples, coconuts, bananas, raisins, and chewing gum; also banjo strings and Hoyt's German Cologne. Others besides dudes partook of some of these delicacies, but not so constantly as the dudes.

As Christmas times approached, merchants began to lay in special supplies characteristic of these festive holidays. Nuts ("nigger toes, especially") and raisins and special candies and oranges and coconuts

were on the list, but principally items associated with Christmas only. Coulter in 1894 ordered the following for his store: 6 boxes of "Pop Crackers," 2 dozen Roman candles (firing 8 balls) and 1 dozen (firing 12 balls); 2½ dozen toy pistols and 2 gross paper caps for them; 2½ dozen dolls; and various other items, mostly gastronomic.

No store whether country cross-roads or village could afford to be without certain stock remedies for the sick, some patented and some long standing by common consent. There were various oils, such as Japanese Oil, British Oil, and Magic Oil. And there was opodeldoc, a camphorated soap liniment of a soft semi-solid consistency; and also there were the liquid liniments and turpentine. As for patent medicines, the Dr. Harter Medicine Company was far in the lead with its various products: "Dr. Harter's Little Liver Pills, German Vermifuge, Lung Balm, Iron Tonic, Soothing Drops, Dr. Duchines Nerve Pills"—and that most popular medicine with a "kick," "Wild Cherry Bitters."

Little devices of chance were beginning to appear. Probably the first to make its way into a Connelly Springs store was a scheme for drawing a lucky number and winning a prize. The draws were ten cents each, and a Connelly Springs dude might often be seen trying out his luck. The punch board was not far behind. A scheme to popularize a new baking powder, Sweetheart Baking Powder, made its appearance about 1900. In each can there was a letter used in spelling S-W-E-E-T-H-E-A-R-T. The first customer to get the necessary letters was to receive a complete set of dining room dishes. The Coulters set their hearts on getting this set of dishes; but as hard as they worked (and some of their neighbors worked for them) they were unable to get the missing letter S. It seemed to have been "an inside job," whereby the can containing the letter S (and there was only one of these letters in the word and only one in the shipment) was never put out for sale. A family related to the clerk got the can containing the magical S, and, of course, the set of dishes.

As before stated, credit was almost universally extended by merchants to their customers. There were almost no cash purchases, though barter was rather common. Cash, credit, and barter prices were all the same. Many a customer came to the store with a basket full of eggs under her arm or a rooster, a hen or two, or a few pullets held in her hand, and sometimes she brought a few cakes of butter, and in season some garden vegetables, some blackberries, and even a few gallons of huckleberries, gathered in the fence rows of fields and in the hills. In exchange for these she made her purchases or accepted a due bill, which was good for future purchases only at that store.

Some preferred customers were allowed to run up accounts to as much as a hundred dollars or more before making settlements. One of Coulter's customers in making her settlement in 1895 for a bill of \$90.00, paid a little cash, brought in a few eggs, and made a final payment with a mule and buggy and set of harness. It was not customary to charge interest on these accounts.



## CHAPTER VII

### MILLMAN

WHEN Coulter moved to Connelly Springs he brought with him the combination of millman and merchant; and it took him no longer to begin milling than merchandising. The resident lumbermen of the village had for some years been Horace W. and William W. Connelly, brothers, and their brother-in-law David P. Goode. They operated under the name of H. W. Connelly & Company until 1888, when Horace and David dropped out and the firm continued under the name of Connelly & Sides—J. M. Sides being another Connelly brother-in-law, now completing the firm. This year a news item noted that they were “doing an excellent business with their mills.”

Coulter was having considerable business dealings with this firm, while he was still over in the “Nation,” selling them lumber and receiving their assistance in looking after loading on freight cars some of his products. When William W. Connelly died in January, 1892, the firm came to an end just in time for Coulter to buy from Connelly’s widow her late husband’s part of the business, to fill the vacancy and set up the firm of Sides & Coulter. As has already appeared, this firm also dealt in general merchandise. Coulter in co-partnership with Sanford Cline still had his mill on Jacobs Fork in the “Nation,” and he also owned a three-fourths interest in Brittain & Company, a lumber plant in that vicinity, and a one-fourth interest in a shingle machine belonging to that company. By the turn of the century he set up a mill near Enola, a few miles south of Morganton, on a small stream draining into Henrys Fork, where he was concerned principally with sawing shingles.

As has already been noted, Coulter bought out Sides in 1894, and continued in both the milling and merchandising businesses under the names of J. E. Coulter, J. E. Coulter & Company, J. P. Abee &

Company, and Glass & Coulter; and true to this proclivity to have an associate in business, he got out a letterhead "\_\_\_\_\_ & Coulter," making it easy to keep up to date by filling in the name of his latest partner. But from the early 1900's he actually went it alone until he quit the milling business in the 1920's. It should be noted that in connection with his lumbering and wood-working mill in Connelly Springs he engaged in grinding grain, using burrstones. The flour and corn meal he manufactured was a minor part of his business, and was never marketed under a trade name. For the most part, farmers brought in their grain; the miller took his toll and ground the rest for the customer.

On July 10, 1910 Coulter suffered the misfortune of losing by fire his whole mill establishment in Connelly Springs. This was the second time he had been burned out in a business establishment, the first fire consuming his store in 1897. Letters of sympathy came from many parts of the country, from friends and from business firms who had read about the loss in the *Manufacturer's Record*. His old friend, Sam Asbury, wrote: "am indeed sorry to hear of your misfortune. I for one having gone through the same trouble at two different times know how to sympathize with you." A customer in Hendersonville said "I am very sorry indeed to hear of your great loss by fire, and I assure you that I sympathize with you very much, and I trust that you have Insurance that will help you out of some of your losses. How did the fire start? Do you intend to go on doing business as before? Are you still going to make lath? It is certainly a great misfortune to be burned out as you have been."

Many dealers from which Coulter had bought machinery were quick to offer their sympathy and solicit the opportunity to supply him with new equipment. Joshua Oldham & Sons of Brooklyn, New York, who had supplied him over the years with saws and who had given him a liberal commission (50% plus 10%) to act as their agent, wrote, "Learning of your recent loss by fire, we can sympathize with you, as a few years ago we ourselves suffered a total loss." They offered their services in reconditioning any saws which were not too badly damaged.

Over the years from the time Coulter had bought a turbine water-wheel for his Jacobs Fork mill on down, he had been dealing with various firms who supplied him with their specialties. Not only did he buy for himself, but he also acted as agent for most of them. The parts of machines which needed more constant attention than any others were saws—large lumber saws, shingle saws, and lath saws. Saws needed hammering to take the warps out, they had to be filed frequently to sharpen the teeth, and retoothing where the teeth were

replaceable. Much of this work could be done at the mill, but saw works were required to do special skillful jobs. Besides Oldham & Sons, Coulter dealt with Henry Disston & Sons of Philadelphia, Chattanooga Saw Works, Southern Saw Works of Atlanta, and Southern Saw & Machinery Works of Augusta. For belting he depended on Gandy Belting Company of Baltimore.

One of the most exacting machines in a wood-working plant was the planer, which dressed lumber, putting tongues and grooves to fit the planks together in buildings, and ornamenting (when desired) by a bead going down the center of the plank. The hum of the planer knives putting a smooth surface on the planks and the whirling of the matcher heads or cutter heads making the tongue and grooves interrupted by a lowering of the pitch when knots were gone over--all this was an operation which must be watched closely. The "Shimer Cutter Heads" were standard with Coulter; they were made by Samuel J. Shimer & Sons of Milton, Pennsylvania.

For founder and machinist work, Coulter dealt with the Salem Iron Works, the Raleigh Iron Works Company, Sergeant Manufacturing Company of Greensboro, and the Mecklenburg Iron Works of Charlotte. For small jobs, castings and other items, he could hardly have done without J. W. (John) Bailey ("Founder and Machinist") of Hildebran nearby. Coulter depended on Bailey from the very beginning of his mill business to the very end. Bailey was a genius as a mechanic but not an expert at all with his native language, as a doleful letter to Coulter in 1934 indicates: "no bisnes no moar to be had . . . Dr's wont low [allow] to work a lik ir [or] weary [worry] over eney thing." He had a bad heart and "i am all so hopen to improve but cant tell which way i am goan."

For the grist mill part of Coulter's establishment, there were the burrstones which never had to be replaced unless they should go through a fire, as his did. But the grooves on the upper and nether millstones had to be sharpened occasionally with special chisels. And the cloth that sifted the ground grain had to be kept in perfect condition. A well-known supplier of this fine silk cloth was Robert L. Lattimer & Company of Philadelphia, who had been making "Old Dutch Anchor Bolting Cloth" since 1835.

Power for Coulter's mill in Connelly Springs was generated by a steam engine and boiler, fed by planer shavings, sawdust, slabs from logs and lath timber, "juggles" from shingle blocks, old railroad crossties, and cordwood cut for the purpose. Planer shavings made good litter for horse stables, and when more than was needed for fuel accumulated, Coulter used this material for that purpose--and sold it for 5¢ a wagon-load. It was dangerous to have much of this



flammable material lying around near the fire-box of the boiler; and it may have been the cause of the mill burning up in 1910, but it was long believed that the fire was of incendiary origin. Within a year or two Coulter built back his mill, but the grist mill was not replaced. J. P. (Jule) Ingle (March 8, 1871-July 27, 1936) was the principal firearm. In 1899 he was receiving 60¢ a day.

No fewer than a hundred or two workmen supplied Coulter with man power, though not all at one time, and not all in the mill business for he had other interests to be served. In the heyday of his business career he hired from fifteen to twenty hands. For short times, some of them were youngsters of the elite of Connelly Springs and vicinity: Alphonso H. (Phonz, "Pete") Abernethy, Oscar Cassels (of the Catawba River Valley), Malcolm Dorsey (son of Joe), Weston Finger (store clerk), Horace and Lee Goode (sons of D. P.), Lionel Greenwade (of Rutherford College), John Calvin (Cal), and Theodore (Theo) McGalliard, George Miller (son of John, the postmaster), Samuel (Sam) Southerland (son of Hugh, Sr.), and Clarence Wilson. Coulter's sons when old enough to work and not in school were prevented from growing up in idleness; and his brother Frank was frequently a hired hand as well as now and then an associate in business. His brother Phil ("Ton") did some special work such as carpentering and clerking in the store.

There were various workmen, hiring for a time, who were farmers with teams and wagons or men of affairs in some other field: Oscar A. Abee (March 24, 1889-September 23, 1944, doing some preaching in the Baptist Church); Tom Barber (running a small lunch counter and store); Doc Berry; Henderson Bivins; Valentine Bounous (Waldensian of nearby Valdese); Jerome (Romey) Bridges; Perry Bumgarner; Labe (Laban) Chester; Jack Deal (blacksmith and son of Sylvanus); John E. Deal (carpenter, planer, and cobbler); Philmore (Phil) Deal (brother of John E., constable, and expert singer); Sid Deal (farmer); Robert (Bob) Ennis and his father William; William (Bill), Joseph F. (Joe), and Theo Griffin (brick makers and brick masons); Alex Hilderbrand (South Mountain farmer); Dave Icard; John Knox; Babe Lail (farmer, teamster, and railroad hostler); David W. Lowman (Dave) (farmer and preacher); Lew Lowman (farmer and wagoner); Walter Riddle; Aaron Robinson; Dan Settlemyre; Poley Townsend (farmer); John Zimmerman (farmer, lumberman, and thresher); and others.

Then there were many who made laboring for wages their principal occupation: Avery Aiken (later a blacksmith); Pink Arney; Pink Ballew; Ed Barnes (later a farmer and teamster); the Joe Berry boys, Charlie, Ed, Gene, Frank, Gordon, Tom, and Walt (occasional

workers); other Berrys, Port and Sumner; Sarah Ann Bowman's boys, George, Lawrence, and Oliver; Lester (Less) Bumgarner; the Childers clan, Arthur, Billy, Elihu, Lafayette (Fate), Israel, Jeff, Logan, Titus, and M. W. (Wib); Luther Crump; Walter ("Cap") Deal; Cicero Franklin; Well Franklin; Max Griffin; Sid Hartsoe (who once worked for Coulter in the "Nation"); Joe Helms; Bill Helton; the Hicks family, Joe, Mary, and Oscar; Charlie, Jess, and Sol Hilderbrand (sons of Alex from over the mountain); Stanley Hildebran (August 4, 1868-April 27, 1932) and his son Presley (Press); Charley Hood; Dave, John, and Lee Hubbard; Gentry M. Ingle (May 28, 1888-May 27, 1959); Ed and Pink Kanipe; Avery Ledford; Alf and Mon Link; John Lowdermilk; Dewey, Earl, and Lee Lowman (sons of David W. Lowman); Harl, Jim, Marshall ("Shine"), Mart (Confederate veteran, died in February, 1920), Mun (brother of Marshall), Sellie Lowman; Walter McNeely; John Henry (lived on slope of Hoosiers Knob), Lum and Sol Martin; Noah and Pink Page; Cleveland, Doc, Gib, and Jeff Perkins; Jule Pruitt (preacher); John, Sr. and John, Jr., Refour (Waldensians) (August 20, 1850-February 16, 1941; March 3, 1878-June 3, 1958); Jack Setzer; Sam Shufler; Bob and Mun Shuford; Harl and Will Stamey; Alex, George, and Lon Stamper; Pat Taylor; Calvin, Sol, and Zeke Townsend; Bob, Charlie, Jeff, John (1880-1957), and Theo Watson; Albert Wilkie (Coulter's ward); H. C. ("Highpockets") Williams; and Ellis, Israel P. (July 19, 1881-October 20, 1918), Midas, and Pink Zimmerman. There were others during Coulter's long period of hiring extending over more than sixty years.

Among those mentioned, something should be said about Walter ("Cap") Deal, Stanley Hildebran, Marshall ("Shine") Lowman (August 16, 1886-October 27, 1918), and Lum Martin. "Cap" Deal, son of John (one of Coulter's most versatile and dependable workmen) was an unusually industrious boy. He appeared one day unannounced and began working at odd jobs around the mill and lumber yards. He soon took on an air of such importance that the nickname of "Cap" naturally descended upon him, a name which he and his father did not at first like very much but did not resent. In his young boyhood days he spent most of his wages for candy. By 1902 he was being listed in the time book as "Cap Deal." He continued into young manhood, working for Coulter.

Stanley was famous for the versatility of his activities and for wearing a mustache all slanting in one direction rather than being parted in the middle. Among the tasks Coulter set him to doing were: mending shoes, bottoming chairs, loading shingles, cutting lath timber, reaping wheat and oats with a scythe and cradle, helping thresh



grain, carpentering, shearing sheep, stacking straw, and butchering hogs.

For long service and faithful dependability, none of Coulter's workmen excelled Marshall ("Shine") Lowman (son of Emma Lowman-Berry). Marshall seems to have got his nickname from the expression, "Arise and shine." He began working for Coulter in September, 1904 and continued on without interruption to his death in 1918. This Lowman family lived on Coulter's place southeastward across Cold Water Creek, a half mile away. "Shine" never married, and lived with his mother and brother Mun, who did not care for work. "Shine's" greatest joy was plowing his favorite team and smoking Prince Albert tobacco in his ripe pipe. He was never a mill hand, but always worked on the farm. Generally he stayed close around home, but now and then he would hire a horse and buggy from Coulter to take his mother across the mountains to their old place, which they never sold, or "to go berrying." In the great flu epidemic of 1918 "Shine" passed on. During the night of October 27th Coulter awoke and was unable to go back to sleep, for thinking that all might not be well with "Shine," who had been suffering with the flu for some days. As Coulter wrote one of his children: "I got out of bed and went over, getting there a short while before he died." It was 20 minutes past 4 o'clock Sunday morning.

The next day the funeral was held at Warlicks Chapel and "Shine" was buried in the graveyard above the church. During the exercises Coulter gave this little eulogy: "It is quite a pleasure for me to be able to say in behalf of the Deceased that he was the most faithful hand ever in my employ, and it has been my lot to hire continuously since 1882, and in that time have employed hundreds of people, and I dare say they were a representative lot of people ranging from young to old, and many were most excellent help, but for length of service the Deceased has worked for me longer than any one ever in my employ. By referring to my time book I find that he began work on September the first 1904; therefore he had been in my employ for more than 14 years. He was most faithful in his duties; never a day that it was suitable that he did not come to work, and if it was unfavorable, and I had indoor work to do and called he would respond. I never called on him that he did not respond. In view of this long continued and faithful devotion to duty I contemplate erecting over his grave a monument setting forth in fitting words this long service for me and my appreciation of it. I have a family of 8 children, and most of them are away, and they write often, and it is a rare occurrence that they do not write about Shine, as he was familiarly and affectionately called. On yesterday and today I have



received letters from my sons in the army, and in both letters due inquiry was made as to Shine, they not knowing that his spirit had taken flight to the God that gave it. My first thought and act after he died was to write all my children, notifying them of his death, and I am sure that genuine sorrow will abide in the breast of every one at hearing of his death. Because of the writing them, and looking after the digging of the grave, etc. I had to leave off the writing of these few lines until this morning, and being interrupted a number of times while doing it, I have not said what I would have liked, nor in as fitting words as I would have liked, but the spirit that prompted the writing is the same, and the forbearance of the hearers is asked. Peace to his ashes."

In due time Coulter erected a marker over the grave, using the name "S. M. Lowman," giving the dates of his birth and death, and according to the old custom detailing his exact age as 32 years, 2 months, and 11 days. This sentence appeared at the bottom of the stone: "This tablet donated by J. E. Coulter because of 14 years Service."

The Lowman family saved very little of "Shine's" wages, spending it through orders on merchants which Coulter gave and through cash when wanted. Under this system Coulter made no monthly settlements. A final settlement showed that Coulter owed \$338 which he gave in three separate checks to "Shine's" mother "Miss Emma," as she was always called.

As Coulter's workmen left his service he remembered them and when any occasion (as death) suggested a comment, generally he had some kind remark to make. Referring to Lum Martin in 1911 he said that Lum was one of the best hands he ever had and that he "was not afraid he would do something," a remark which indicated that some of his workmen might have been otherwise.

Coulter paid wages in keeping with the times, graded according to the skill required by the task as well as by the ability and industry of the workman himself. For the first ten years after he had come to Connelly Springs, his daily wage scale ran in this wise, as indicated by his time books: 20¢, 30¢, 40¢, 50¢, 60¢, 65¢, 70¢, 75¢, 80¢, and \$1.00. Most of the workmen in this period received from 40¢ to 60¢ a day. Bob Ennis, Charley Hood, and John Deal were in the top bracket, receiving 90¢ to \$1.00 a day, because they were engaged in mill work requiring special skills. "Shine" Lowman, who was always a farm worker, received 60¢ a day. By 1920 Coulter was paying his best workmen (in mill work) \$2.50 and \$3.00 a day.

Most of Coulter's workmen were white, but he generally had a few Negroes working for him. He did not let the color of the skin of his

workmen determine their wages. For equal skills, white and colored fared the same. The Connelly Negroes were the most numerous, being descendants of the slaves of the Connelly families. There were Elliott, Durant, Gorman, James, Jordan, Joe, John, Lawyer, Monk, and the Connelly women who did washing, Ann, Alice, and Et. There were John and Willis Ervin (father and son); Bill, Conellis (Cornelius), George, Ches, and Sam Jenkins; George Johnson (an important preacher type); Burr and Lark McGalliard; Linn Misher (Michaux); Bob (August 15, 1840-May 14, 1925) and Nelse (son of Bob) Reese; and Andy Wallace.

Willis Ervin was Coulter's favorite Negro workman. Willis worked at many jobs, but mostly away from the mill, digging ditches, building rock walls, mowing fence rows and ditch banks, and doing some plowing. His wife Martha for a long time did the washing and laundrying for the Coulters. Willis began working for Coulter soon after he had moved to Connelly Springs; but for long spells Willis would leave and go to Middlesboro, Kentucky, to work in the coal mines. Martha and Willis did not get along very well together, and it seems that they later separated. Martha was ambitious for her daughter to go off to college, and in appreciation of a recommendation Coulter gave the daughter, Martha wrote him, "After reading the Kind words from your hand, as a Greate Pensman, and, an honorable Gentleman, Sir, I Cannot Express My Thanks To You In words how I appreciate the High Recommendation, that you has Digested through your Excilent wisdom In behalf of my Daughter."

The most colorful of Coulter's Negro workmen was Bob Reese, a big six-footer with a strong back and hard muscles. Bob was born a slave in Jasper County, Georgia, and when General William T. Sherman on his march to the sea came through that region Bob joined the throng of camp followers and continued on through South Carolina and into North Carolina, finally making his way to Burke County where he settled near Connelly Springs. Bob's job was always heavy work—such as loading shingles into freight cars and unloading fertilizer. It was a familiar sight to see Bob with a bale of shingles resting on a pad on his back making his way up a ramp into the car. It would be no exaggeration to say that Bob loaded with shingles more than a hundred cars. He was loading shingles in Connelly Springs for Coulter while John Ellis was still living over in the "Nation." At this time Bob was drawing 75¢ a day—high wages for that day and generation.

Andy Wallace was not a constant workman for Coulter, but he was good at hard labor digging ditches or chopping wood. Andy

was one of the principal workmen digging an ice pit, which Coulter maintained for a few years on his place, filling it every winter with ice cut from a pond he built on Cold Water Creek. Andy, like all Negroes swinging a pick or a sledge hammer, worked with the rhythm of some song interspersed with grunts. One of Andy's favorites was:

When you hear my bulldog a-growlin,  
Somebody round (grunt), somebody round (grunt).  
When you hear my pistol a-firin,  
Somebody dead (grunt), somebody dead (grunt).

Coulter's first Connelly Springs mill, while he was associated with Sides and some years thereafter, was located a short distance south of the railroad depot. He later located it northeast of the depot, near the banks of Cold Water Creek. In neither case was there a spur track of the railroad leading to the mill, and this fact made it necessary to store lumber, laths, and shingles ready for shipment, in sheds near the railroad side track. Because the sheds should be on the railroad right-of-way to afford easy access to the railroad cars, Coulter was required to get permission to build them and the fee the railroad company charged was \$5.00 a year.

Before lumber was ready for shipment, either dressed or rough, it had to be dried. It could be dried on the lumber yards near the mill by hacking it up, the layers being separated by sticks to admit a ready flow of air. This method required from two to three months. For quick drying, within a week or ten days, Coulter operated a dry kiln. This was a building enclosed on all sides, with large swinging doors at one end to admit a stack of lumber on trucks running on a track. Beneath the track was a long passageway, running the length of the building, enclosed in hewn rock through which heated air made its way to a chimney. The firebox was at the end of the structure opposite the big-door entrance. Wood was burned and the fire must be kept constantly going, day and night, requiring two firemen each working twelve hours—8-hour days had never been heard of then, though labor unions in the North were chanting "Eight hours for work, eight hours for play, eight hours for what you will." Unless very carefully constructed, there was danger of a dry kiln of this type catching fire and burning up, with thousands of feet of lumber inside. And here took place the first of the series of big fires of business establishments, which plagued Coulter for the next decade and a half. The kiln burned in 1896 with a total loss of the building and everything inside; but he soon built it back on the same spot.



Coulter did not manufacture all the lumber, shingles, and laths which he sold. Since he received many more orders than he could fill from his own manufacture, he depended heavily on suppliers in the vicinity and farther away. Some of his suppliers specialized in one kind of timber product, while most of them made some of all of the three standard items, lumber, shingles, and laths. Lew Taylor with his mill across the South Mountains on Henrys Fork sold Coulter millions of shingles over a long period of time. Coulter was dealing with him as early as 1890. During one short period in 1895 Lew delivered to Coulter at "62 Mile Siding" (Hildebran) 140,000 shingles and at Hickory 35,000. Lew was a big fat man, weighing about 300 pounds. He generally traveled in a cart, filling up the whole seat. If Lew could write he did not always choose to do so, for some of the checks he received from Coulter were endorsed with "his mark."

Most of Coulter's suppliers lived across the South Mountains and eastward in the "Nation," where there was still a great deal of virgin timber left. Among these were Dan Johnson; J. J. Hicks of Mull Grove; J. P. Icard of Sawmill; Jule Brittain; D. B. Mull; Amos Huffman of Pearson; Lew Lowman; Russ Huffman; Carswell & Huffman; and south of Morganton around Enola were R. C. Chapman, Mace Brothers, J. R. Kelley, and W. T. Carswell. The Glass brothers Theodore and Weber (but not as a firm) were deep in the lumber and shingle business—Theodore generally living in Morganton but doing business and receiving mail at Warlick and Enola. Weber operated nearer Connelly Springs alone or as Glass & Coulter or Abernethy (B. B.) & Glass. Also in the Connelly Springs vicinity was Gib Perkins.

Coulter was frequently heavily pressed to fill orders and he urged his suppliers to hurry up. W. T. Carswell of Morganton, R.F.D., as evidence that he was doing his best, sent Coulter a copy of a letter he wrote to J. T. Knox, complaining about a machine Knox had borrowed: "Dear Sir you never Brung my mill back like you told me that you Would as hartle [Hartle Knox] throad hit of [off] at fred Recors and you told me that you Would Pay me 25 cts on every thousand feet you cut and you never done Nothing you Promist me you Would now i hate to do hit but if you dont send me my pay for the rune of my Mill at once i Will gave hit to a lawyer for clecting and also for not Bringing my Mill Back cording to contract. Now John you Please Pay me at once and save trouble as i am in nede of hit Bad John dont fale to send hit at once and oblige me."

A few finished lumber products Coulter advertised, which he did

not make at all but depended on suppliers wholly. Doors, window frames, and other wooden house fixtures he bought largely from the Dudley Lumber Company of Granite Falls, who gave him a very large discount and promised that they could give him "prompt attention and as good work as any factory in this country." Also J. J. Hicks sold Coulter such material.

Singles were packed in bales of 50, 100, 200, and 250; but the smallest bales were generally preferred—though Bob Reese loaded car after car with the heavy bales of 200 and 250. An ordinary freight car would hold from 75,000 to 80,000 shingles. Shingles were 16 and 18 inches long and 3 and 4 inches wide. When put on the roof 5 or 5½ inches were exposed to the weather. Poplar shingles could hardly be sold and likewise shingles cut from Nigger Pine or old field pine. The standard shingle was heart yellow pine; though in sawing shingle blocks there had to be some sap shingles, it was hard to dispose of them. If the sawyer became careless or his machine was not kept in good order, he would probably saw some shingles so thin on the thin end as to make them worthless. Such shingles were known as "feather edges," and if any got baled up with the good shingles, there were loud complaints from the buyers. Other imperfections in shingles were worm holes, mill-dewed or blued, rotten ends, and wind-shaken. It was a custom for buyers to ask for samples, as previously noted.

As early as 1906 asbestos and tin shingles were coming into competition with wooden ones, and after 1920 when Coulter was practically out of the mill business, he continued to sell shingles but not of local manufacture—the fine shingle timber in this region had now been exhausted. He now dealt extensively in red cedar shingles from the Northwest and British Columbia. At first he began buying them from Mixer & Co. of Buffalo, New York; but soon he by-passed this middleman and got closer to the maker. In the late 1920's he bought many car loads from Fred A. England Lumber Company of Seattle and from Robert McNair Shingle Company Ltd. of Vancouver, British Columbia. These shingles were very expensive compared with prices of shingles Coulter had manufactured a few years back. The red cedar shingles were reputed to be longer lasting; but the freight on them greatly increased their price. In 1925 in one shipment Coulter bought 231,000 for \$1,006; the freight on them was \$446. Two years later on another shipment amounting to \$916 the freight was \$440. Both of these shipments were from Vancouver. There was the additional drawback of poor railroad service. The Seattle firm informed Coulter on one of its shipments that they had



requested the railroad "to keep an urgent wire tracer after his shipment and do all they possibly can to hurry it through."

Although Coulter sold a few laths before coming to Connelly Springs, he probably manufactured none while in the "Nation"; but after coming to this railroad village he entered extensively into manufacturing, buying, and selling laths. Laths were cut from smaller timber than could be used for lumber or shingles. By 1906 he was manufacturing millions of laths, and also buying many from suppliers. A good outfit (bolter and 6-saw machine) could cut in a period of ten hours (the ordinary day then) 50,000 laths. The standard size laths were  $\frac{3}{8}$  by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches and 4 feet long, and were put up generally 100 to the bale, though some customers preferred 50 to the bale. If put up in bales of 100, the bale should not weigh more than 50 pounds—if more, they were too green or wet. Old field pine timber made very poor laths, because such laths were given to warping, buckling, or crooking. One customer declared that his plasterers refused to work with such laths.

Coulter's mill work in Connelly Springs was concerned much more with sawing shingles and laths than lumber. He bought most of his lumber from mills nearer the timber or he, himself, ran small mills there, and hauled the lumber to his Connelly Springs mill, where it was stacked, air dried or kiln dried, and then dressed as weatherboarding, ceiling, and so on.

Prices of lumber, shingles, and laths varied with the quality and the times, but in unison with all other products they steadily increased (with a few sags) as the dollar became less valuable for reasons which the economists were not always in agreement. Of course, prices varied slightly almost from day to day; and to register these changes or indicate whether these prices were f. o. b. (freight on board cars) at Connelly Springs or freight paid, Coulter devised in the 1890's a blank form for filling in the prices of various lumber products. On April 13, 1898 he quoted these prices (per thousand feet or numbers) with delivery in Asheville (where he did a great deal of business): Framing up to 20 feet long \$7.50; Knotty Boards, \$7.50; Weather Boards, \$8.00 (first class), \$7.00 (second class), \$6.00 (third class); German Siding, \$13.00 (first class), \$10.00 (second class), \$8.00 (third class); Flooring, \$12.50 (first class), \$10.00 (second class), \$7.50 (third class); Ceiling, \$12.00 (first class), \$9.00 (second class), \$7.00 (third class); Basing Boards, \$13.00 (first class), \$10.00 (second class), \$8.00 (third class); Pine Shingles (per thousand), \$2.10 (first class), \$2.00 (second class), \$1.90 (third class); Laths (per thousand), \$1.50; (forest pine), \$1.25 (second growth). Of course, prices f. o. b. Connelly Springs would be considerably less.



Yellow pine heart shingles ("the best shingles on the market") were selling in 1902 for \$2.35 per thousand; white pine brought \$2.00, but four years later they were selling for \$3.25, and yellow pine for \$3.50. In 1903 Coulter was offering heart pine shingles for \$3.50. In 1906 he was quoting sap shingles at \$2.25, while at the same time suppliers were offering them to him at \$1.75. But profits so large were not the rule; he often made only 10¢ per thousand. Around 1900, laths were selling for \$1.15 or slightly more; from 1906 to 1913 they were around \$2.00; but by 1919 (war prices) they were selling for \$5.50. And for a short spurt in 1920, they brought \$17.00—"Never heard of anything like it," Coulter remarked. The price immediately began sagging during the hard times of the early 1920's, returning all the way back to the vicinity of \$2.00.

In the heyday of his lumbering business Coulter would have on his yards and under his sheds a half million or more feet of lumber and some hundreds of thousands of shingles and laths. As has been indicated, much of his business was that of a middleman. Of his own manufacture in 1905, he reported to the United States Government, 1,650,000 shingles, 1,000,000 laths, and 685,000 board feet of lumber.

In building up a market for his lumber products, Coulter advertised widely in the newspapers, he distributed cards listing his specialties, and he gave them conspicuous attention on his letterheads. His friends and kinsmen would often refer customers to him. He developed a market as wide and varied as those who wanted what he had to sell. He sold to individuals, large orders and small; to contractors and builders; to lumber yards and suppliers; to churches and schools; and to agents who sold on a commission. He would allow 5% to some responsible person, who might be running some other business such as merchandising, but who was willing to keep a supply of Coulter's lumber on hand or merely get orders for him. D. C. Clark, "Contractor and Builder" of Clyde, sold for Coulter there, in the early 1890's. Another agent with whom Coulter had extensive dealings in Clyde after Clark was out of the picture, was L. C. Reno. He began dealing with Reno in the latter 1890's, giving him 10% commission, and promised not to sell to anyone else in Clyde, but if under some unusual circumstance he should do so, he would still give Reno 10% on the sale.

When the Negro church, Israel's Chapel, several miles northeast of Connelly Springs, was being built or repaired, Coulter sold the congregation a bill of lumber; and when Rutherford College was rebuilding after the disastrous fire of 1890 Coulter supplied much of the needed building material. When George Vanderbilt was erecting

his immense castle near Biltmore (a suburb of Asheville) he depended on Coulter for some of his materials.

In nearby Hickory the Piedmont Wagon Company (the first big business of the town) and Hutton & Bourbonnais, "Manufacturers of Lumber, Boxes and Mouldings" (the next large Hickory firm, which was set up by a French Canadian and his partner from Michigan)—both of these companies bought largely from Coulter. Farther to the eastward he dealt with E. B. Springs & Co., "Fertilizers, Vehicles and Storage," of Charlotte (S. C. McNinch, Successors); High Point Hardwood Manufacturing Co. (which in March, 1906 wanted 60 carloads of yellow pine heart shingles, which Coulter was unable to supply); Snow Lumber Company of High Point; and W. H. Worth & Co. and Zachary & Zachary, both of Raleigh.

To the westward at Old Fort was Walter Graham (a builder and patentee and owner of an axe blade, a drawing of which he displayed on his letterhead) was a frequent customer. By-passing Asheville, which was Coulter's little lumber empire, the listing of customers jumps to Waynesville, where J. K. Boone & Co. and S. C. Satterthwait, "Builders Depot," held forth; to E. B. Goellet in Saluda; to J. N. Mease of Canton; on to Hot Springs to include Hot Springs Barytes Co. and the Mountain Park Hotel; and to A. M. Fry of Bryson City.

Leaving the Tar Heel State, Coulter dealt with several firms in Virginia, including the Hickson Lumber Co. of Lynchburg; Price & Son in Washington, D. C. bought extensively; and passing on to the Empire State of the North, Coulter sold to firms in the City of New York and in Buffalo. In 1905 Henry W. Peabody & Co., "Export and Import Commission Merchants," wanted quotations on 1,000,000 laths.

Returning to Coulter's Asheville empire, there was a small host of firms dealing with him in little and big amounts. W. H. Westall and O. R. Revell were his oldest, largest, and longest-lived customers. Others were George F. Scott, not far behind; Thomas L. Clayton; and W. T. Hadlow.

Of all the people Coulter ever dealt with, in the lumber business or any other, Revell was the most personable, friendly, frank, and humorous. He was a sort of "jack of all trades" which related to lumber and real estate. He was "Contractor and Builder"; he dealt in "Real Estate and Loans"; he had "Houses for Rent, All kinds and Sizes, from Boarding Houses, small Cottages, also Apartments and Flats, furnished and unfurnished. Persons wishing to locate in Asheville would do well to Address or Call on O. D. Revell, No. 31 Temple Court, Asheville, N. C." For a time he operated under the name of Revell and Wagner, but for most of the time it was simply O. (Oliver)



D. Revell. Coulter began dealing with him as early as 1892, and that year Coulter allowed him 5% on an order Revell got for him. From that time on, Revell was advising Coulter who to trust and who to avoid unless it was a cash transaction. In 1896 Revell wrote that he was recommending him to lots of people but at a little higher price than Coulter gave Revell "so you can get more from them than you do from me; then that will allow me to get things still cheaper. Dont you see old man, so good buy." The same year he wrote, "I Recommended you to a new Contractor by the name of John white sides, but be Careful in selling him." More advice: "You had better be careful about filling church bills. You no Every body gets in trouble on church work; no one in the church feels Responsible for its debts."

Revell was especially scornful of some of the Waynesville contractors, and chided Coulter for dealing with them: "I am surprised that you let parties at Waynesville have lumber with out paying for it in advance; what do you mean. I told you not to let it go that way." Revell could not resist having his fun with Coulter on his Waynesville business: "Hope you are well and got the money from your friends at Waynesville." And when Coulter succeeded in getting a payment Revell replied, "My dear sir and only friend I am so glad to heare from you and especially that you have got the money from Waynesville; they will ketch you napping yet if you dont mind; they are bating you." Again: "You always Get into Trouble when you fail to take my advice. I am going to have you a guardian appointed at once to take care of you."

Revell, himself, was sometimes slow pay. In 1893 he wrote in reply to a request for a settlement of a bill: "We never was so HARD UP for money—cannot collect a dollar"; "We are very sorry that we cannot comply with your request at once, and we appreciate your kindness, but realize the fact that appreciation does not pay the bill." Jokingly he wrote in 1894, "Hoping you are having a good trade and Collecting from other people faster than you do from us." A week later: "I dont see sow Revell and Wagner can pay any thing more by the 20th as they ar so hard up, and by the way if I was you I would not Credit them any more, as I think they ar bad pay also. So hoping you will obey orders, I Remain your faithful Boss and adviser." More pleasantries instead of money: "I did not find any mistake this time. I am glad you have got so you do not make mistakes especially in your favor. Well what ar you going to do for Christmas. Ar you going to send me a nice Christmas present. I will try and hold my breath until I get it. Well I will admit that it has been a long time since Revell and Wagner has paid you any thing



but they will pay before long. They are not able to Pay you Just now but they will pay you soon. It is a good debt if you never get it but you will get it shore. You charge me enough for lumber to allow you to wait a while and you know I am always happy to pay you." In sending a check of \$76.16, Revell remarked, "I must thank you for being so good to wait on mee; you are a good man to deal with." Sending him another check, of \$106.68, Revell said, "I thank you so much for your cind [kind] leniancy, and will always think of you in my dreams. I will never forget you nor forsake you *ah men*." To another of Coulter's requests for money, Revell replied, "Dont send to me for money for some time; give me a Rest." Coulter one time inquired in Asheville as to Revell's worth. When Revell found out about it, he wrote Coulter, "I hope you found out what I was worth from Mr Brevard; you kneed not get scaird as to my worth. I can buy you and all your mills and all your men and not miss the money."

When Coulter was slow in filling orders Revell came back at him with vigorous complaints and threats to quit dealing with him: "For heaven sake ship mee the lumber." Also he complained about Coulter's delay in answering letters: "If you are not dead answer this letter at once"; "I was so surprised to heare from you that I almost draped off my feet; still I did not heare of your death, and supposed you was still a live." Sometimes Revell discovered Coulter's lumber count incorrect. In 1900 when he found a consignment of lumber short, he wrote, "I am sorry it is this way but you are not hurt as the lumber is simply not there and I dont wish to pay for what is not there. I would not cheat you out of a cent for any thing and never did and will not start this late day." On another occasion Revell wrote, "I no I am correct; any way you will find on the framing that I found more than you did; so you see I am trying to do you Just O. K."

Revell always liked to mix humor and pleasantries in his business letters, and he would heighten the atmosphere by purposely misspelling words. At the end of a letter in which he said that he had recommended Coulter to several prospective buyers: "Hope you will have a big turkey for thanksgiving. Cant you give me a present of 2 nice turkeys for Christmas. Just for luck." On another occasion he wanted a Christmas gift: "Send me my Christmas gift at once; a big turkey will do or a gal. of mountain dew." He re-enforced this open hint with a check for \$259.59. Shortly before the Bryan-McKinley election of 1896, he added to a letter: "Hoo raw for McKinley by gosh"—this called forth to banter Coulter on his well-known support of Bryan.

With all his business interests in Asheville, Revell seemed to be somewhat foot-loose and free. Shortly before the Spanish-American War broke out, Revell turned up in Havana, Cuba. With business on his mind, he wrote Coulter after his return that "lumber sells well there." He advised Coulter to look up the freight rates: "Less see what we can do about it; I believe there is money in it." Soon he was on a trip to Europe, writing Coulter from Hamburg, Germany. After he was back and settled down again he was sending in orders to Coulter: "I want you to furnish me the lumber, laths and shingles like you used to." Then a long silence and next Coulter heard from Revell he was in Muscogee, Oklahoma, but he had temporarily returned to Asheville where he still owned a good deal of property. He said that he was now \$100,000 better off than when he had left. And here the story of the Coulter-Revell business dealings ends—whether there was more, no records remain to tell the tale or to reveal the future career of Revell. With all the pleasantries and bantering that went on, there should be no question that both profited from their business relations.

As much may not be said of Coulter's long-time dealings with E. B. Goelet of Saluda—at least Coulter was left sadder but probably no wiser because of Goelet's winning pleadings for further credit. Goelet was a physician and druggist, whose ambitions and restless nature could not be confined within the four walls of a drug store or doctor's office. Since Saluda was a resort town and people from the low country were building summer homes there, Goelet organized in 1896 "The Saluda Construction Company" and began building these homes. Soon his vision surmounted individual houses and he set out to organize a syndicate to erect on the center of a 200-acre tract culminating on top of Piney Mountain, the Grand Park Hotel. There were to be "a grand Boulevard and Drives, Bicycle Course, Tennis and Croquet Plats, Cosey Nooks, Dells and Grottos, Bath House and Swimming Pool. Toboggin Slide, Shooting Gallery, Orchard, Vineyard, a Lake for Boating, Base Ball Park, and Pasture." Previous to this time he had been buying lumber and other wood products from Coulter and had been "slow pay," but he had ample explanations, though Coulter had asked R. G. Dun & Company to give a rating on him. They said that he was "considered a good physician and stands well in this community . . . and is considered worthy of moderate credit" and that he was worth from \$500 to \$1,000 above the homestead.

Whenever Goelet would send in a new order he would sweeten it a little by enclosing a check for \$10.00 or \$15.00, but always leaving himself deeply in debt to Coulter. Some of these checks



would be dated ahead and when presented for payment often they would "bounce." Goelet would plead not to be cut off, as he would "make good" as soon as possible: "Please don't lose faith in me, I will send you the \$29.50 for that protested check." Coulter, always kind of heart in his business, would disclaim any lack of faith in him and would go ahead and fill his orders. Goelet would return his thanks: "I thank you for your good opinion of me. I am a master Mason, and try to live up to one of the main principles of the order, which is never to willfully *Wrong, Cheat, or Defraud* anyone." On one occasion he attempted to boost his credit by stating that the bill of lumber he was ordering was "for Senator Aldrich, a friend of mine." Nelson W. Aldrich was a Senator from Rhode Island from 1881 to 1911.

Goelet would always have the ready answer that those who owed him were slow in paying and from some he was unable to collect at all: "I regret very much, having got behind with you, I feel very badly about it, but it was not my fault, and I will pay you every dollar that I owe you." Recently he had been in South Carolina trying to make collections, but all he could get was promises. "The worry trying to collect," he said, "and the disappointment at not being able to meet my payments promptly as I wished to do, made me sick, and I was laid up for eight days. It is a great disappointment to me that I could not pay you promptly, as I always wish to do, but it has been the hardest time to collect money that I ever knew."

For some years, it seems, there were no dealings, but in 1911, Coulter wrote to a person in Saluda, inquiring about Goelet and his financial responsibility. The reply was that Goelet was still in business but "about as usual running behind." He was now dealing in wood and logs and doing a little building. He suggested that Coulter might get a small payment out of Goelet and thus renew his old account: "I think his intentions are to pay everybody when he has the money."

Under the circumstances of always being heavily in debt to Coulter, Goelet could indulge little in the customary complaints that lumbermen received from their customers. In a sort of covert chiding of Coulter for being late in filling some of his orders, Goelet remarked that some of the lumbermen he had been dealing with would promise immediate shipment, but they generally ran from two to six weeks behind. He added, "I want to find some man who will ship at least within a few days of when he promises to—and I will give him a good business." Bad lumber was another one of these complaints; and Goelet had this to say directly to Coulter about some worthless lumber and shingles: "I dont see what your men put them in for,



unless they are stockholders in the Ry. Co., and want to add all the weight they can to run up the freight Bills."

Goelet was undoubtedly an honest man, but his business ability did not equal his honesty; and he finally left Coulter as the loser in their long drawn-out business transactions.

The lumber business taken in its entirety, from the tree in the forest to the plank or shingle nailed in the construction of a house, partook somewhat of that ancient and devious profession known as horse trading. Some lumbermen grew rich, some grew poor, some merely maintained their heads above water, some were killed by it, and some withdrew before it killed them, as did a South Carolinian, who wrote Coulter, "I am glad to say I am out of the lumber business. I think it is one reason why I am feeling so much better."

There were frequent claims of shortages. This was a favorite device of customers with blunt consciences to get lumber cheaper, by receiving more than they paid for. But there was plenty of room for mistakes in counting lumber as it was loaded into cars and taken out, and where Coulter or the purchaser did not do it himself, there was always the hazard of careless or inexperienced workmen. The seller always hazarded the chances that he had made mistakes against himself, and then it took a customer with a keen conscience to make mention of the fact; but there were such, as an Asheville contractor who wrote Coulter about his mistakes: "I have corrected one. But as you will notice, it was mostly in your favor." On another shipment Coulter billed his customer for 96,400 laths, when according to the customer's count there were 114,700; but the customer surmised that Coulter had purposely included more than indicated because some of them were too thin and some badly damaged. Coulter had a calculator aid, which was a handy tool under some circumstances, but likely of little value in counting lumber when it was loaded into cars. It was a small book entitled *Ropp's Commercial Calculator. A Practical Arithmetic for Practical Purposes. Containing a Complete System of Useful, Accurate and Conventional Tables and Simple, Short Practical Methods for Rapid Calculation*. It was got out by C. Ropp and first copyrighted in 1875.

Many of the troubles that beset Coulter came from his suppliers; these were especially shortages in counting, inferior products, and delays in making deliveries. Coulter often bought lumber products which the supplier hauled to some more convenient railroad point than Connelly Springs (as Morganton, Valdese, Hildebran, Hickory, or some stations even farther away), loaded them on cars according to Coulter's orders, and Coulter never saw the material, and depended entirely on his supplier's count. Many suppliers running little mills

were better sawyers than counters, with no thought of being dishonest. A Swannanoa customer wrote Coulter, "I went to look at the laths & find them to be a very inferior lot—not fit to use at all. . . . I guess you did not see them or you certainly would not have sent them to me." In an instance where Coulter put in a few extra bales of shingles to make up for the inferior ones which his supplier had slipped in, his customer remarked, "I am not making any claims, for the extra ones that you put in I think will cover the loss, but the man who makes them, ought not to put in such stuff, they are not fit to cover a cowshed, and only fit to make you and me pay more freight to the R. R. Co." He added that it was "a swindle on you for they never put the bad ones on the outside of the bales."

With the best of intentions and a feeling of certainty, a lumberman might make a firm promise that a shipment would leave at a stated time, in order to keep a contractor from having to "lay off" his workmen for lack of building material; and when the shipment did not arrive as promised there was righteous indignation and much of it. A Chapel Hill customer wrote in 1895, "We have been Waiting Waiting Waiting for the Car of Lumber. . . . We know it has been very bad weather but hope you have been able to get it off by this time." Another after expecting his lumber every day for a long time wrote, "People don't live to the age of Methuselah in this country." Most of the time the blame lay with the supplier, who promised Coulter the lumber, shingles, or laths at a given time, and then found that he could not perform. But in some instances the blame lay with the agents of the Southern Railway Company.

During the time when Coulter was doing most of his shipping, the railway agents at Connelly Springs were Wilkes E. Lowe, B. B. Abernethy, J. P. Knox, and C. O. Morgan. Abernethy had, by far, the longest tenure, serving as early as 1896 with some interims for the others but continuing from 1907 on for many years—much beyond the time when Coulter was dealing in lumber. In Abernethy's case there was an apparent conflict of interests, though Coulter never seemed to have complained about it as did his customers. Also Abernethy dealt in lumber, shingles, and laths, and holding the position he did, he could delay asking for cars when Coulter put in orders for them. An irate customer, who was made so by the delay Coulter suffered in getting cars, wrote him, "There is something ROTTEN somewhere. . . . I am satisfied that Mr. Abernethy must be giving you a ROTTEN DEAL on cars, and you had better look the matter up. It looks to me like Mr. Abernethy was hardly doing the right thing by the Southern R. R. Co. He is looking after his LATH business better than he is the R. R. business." A little later he reported



that "Abernethy is offering me a car but I don't want them if I can get them from you." Then he added, "I hope you will arrange to keep me in lath as I prefer not to buy from anyone else over there."

Since Abernethy was also the telegraph operator, he would know the contents of any message either sent or received by Coulter, and thus be able to take advantage of inside information on Coulter's business. This same customer (from Hendersonville, he was) wrote Coulter: "I will send in a COMPLAINT to the Southern Ry Co at Washington D. C. and state the FACTS to them, and tell them that my shippers can't reply to my telegrams because their Agent is running a business of the nature that shippers are afraid to reply over the wires." Delays were also brought about by not placing cars after they had arrived, where they could be loaded.

The railroads allowed cars to be dispatched without a full load, with the understanding that the load would be completed at other stations. For this special service the railroad made a charge of \$5.00 each time the car was set off. A car of the size prevailing in 1896 would hold about 12,000 feet of lumber or as before noted, from 75,000 to 80,000 shingles.

For failing to transmit to Coulter a certain amount of money left with a railroad agent in another place, the customer said he would "ask the R. R. agent why in the hell did they not send you your money. I do not like no such business. . . . Perhaps they need placing before the Pujo Committee." This was an allusion to a committee appointed by Congress in 1912 to investigate the "money trust." In another respect the railroads were guilty of late arrivals of shipments, by not properly dispatching cars and keeping them moving; but they were subject to a penalty of \$5.00 a day for delays beyond the time allowed. The railroads were allotted seven days to take a car from Connelly Springs to Winston-Salem, but in 1906 on one occasion the Southern took ten days, and was therefore assessed a fine of \$15.00.

Also some of the blame could be assessed against Coulter himself. He was trying to fill too many orders with material which he did not have but was depending too much on the promises of suppliers who for one reason or another did not comply.

Despite complaints about delays, shortages, and bad lumber there were some bright spots. A person wrote Coulter, "You have been recommended to me as a good man to buy lumber from"; and another wrote, "I return many thanks for your promptness." An Asheville customer in 1895 remarked, "You have been very prompt in all your shipments and they have come in reasonably correct." Another was "well pleased with lumber sent me"; and Max Wiese of the Connally



Graphite Works said, "Your enterprising spirit has left a very favorable impression with me. I feel that you are ambitious and keep your promises."

Yet compliments did not make up for the refusal of various "Black Knights" to pay their lumber bills, either remaining silent to all letters asking for settlement or pleading inability. Coulter made long trips to try to make collections and in some cases, much to his dislike, sued in the courts and got judgments, which generally turned out to be no good when attempts were made to enforce them.

As has been mentioned in several instances Coulter tried to guard against selling lumber to strangers without first learning something about their credit rating. He wrote to anyone whom he thought might know or would in confidence give an opinion—to postmasters, lawyers, friends and acquaintances, to kinsmen, and for the more important prospective customers he resorted to credit rating firms. His friend Revell had always been quick to offer advice (as has been noted) and in answer to a letter in 1895, Revell replied, "I would not ship or sell him any thing; all ho nose him says he is a dead beat and byes all he can and pays nothing; so better be care full." (Revell reveled in using flippant spellings).

W. H. Westall in Asheville when plied for pay in 1897 said, "I never have experienced during my nine years in business money so hard to get hold of." Thomas L. Clayton of Asheville ignored all duns, leading Coulter to resort to lawyers with results unknown. George F. Scott & Company of the same place was through a suit in court forced to pay \$542; but this left of the claim, \$3,440.97 uncollected. Coulter's efforts to collect from A. M. Fry of Bryson City seems never to have resulted in any satisfaction. One of Coulter's greatest losses was dealing with Price & Son of Washington, D. C. He placed the debt in the hands of a lawyer but as far as available records reveal, little or nothing was collected.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HOME AND FARM

WHEN Coulter moved to Connelly Springs in the late summer of 1892 he intended to drive his stakes deep, probably never to pull them up again—this was his third move. Renting the Stewart Place was merely a stop-gap until he could secure land in the village and build a residence. On March 13, 1893 he bought from J. M. Sides and his wife Ida a tract of about 24½ acres lying a half mile south of the railway depot, up a road leading across the South Mountains, facetiously called "Huckleberry Street." (The streets and roads in the village were never officially given names). For this land Coulter paid \$241.41.

On the edge of this tract nearest the village he soon selected a house place and began assembling workmen and material. Activities began in the following June when William Ennis, who lived a short way down the "street," and Horace Perkins, aided by John Ervin and Bob Reese (colored workmen), began clearing a space in the woods. They left a copious supply of well-placed saplings (white oak and mountain oak), which by 1962 had grown into giant trees, providing more shade than the Coulters had bargained for, almost three-quarters of a century previously.

Logan Abernethy of Rutherford College, aided by W. L. (Bill) Griffin, laid off the foundations; and Griffin, aided by Bob Reese and others, began the pillars and brickwork. Some of the pillars, the hearths, and the fire places were made of a fire-resistant rock hewn from a quarry over in the hills to the eastward on land which Coulter would later acquire. Miles Deal was in charge of the carpentry work. Others helping in whatever needed to be done were Malcolm Dorsey (son of Joe, who lived up the road a quarter mile), Bob Ennis (son of William), Jack Deal, Joe Aiken, Jeff Cannon, Doc and Jason Perkins, Pink Ballew, Sid Morgan, Frank Nance, Sid

Hartsoe, Jones and Cicero Franklin, Charley Robinson, John Wilson, and others. Coulter's two brothers Frank and Philip lent a hand, and when the roof had been put on and Philip was sweeping the trash off he fell 26 feet and broke his left arm at the wrist, but was otherwise unhurt.

The house was two stories, consisting of nine rooms, including a kitchen. It was finished by the end of the year, and immediately was painted white with green shutters. There were only three other houses in town which equalled it in size and appearance. The doors, mantles, and other inside fixtures were provided by Revell and Wagner of Asheville. Coulter's own mills and Sides & Coulter provided much of the lumber and shingles, though Lew Taylor, John Shoup, Lewis Page, and John Knox supplied some of the materials. Doc Perkins and R. F. Stephens did some of the hauling. Other buildings erected on the place were a smokehouse, a hen house, a woodshed, and a large barn, with four stables, a gear house, two corn cribs, a buggy shed, and a two-story hay loft. Later there were added a sheep-stable with a feed loft and a large barn (the "new Barn"), consisting of cow stables and feed lofts, and an additional sheep (and goat stable,) and a basement housing a machine pulled by horses to generate power for cutting feed and shredding corn.

Later there were erected on the place a meat house with a deep cellar designed to keep milk and butter cool, a house with a furnace to dry fruit, a pumpkin house, a flower pit, and an ice house. The ice house was a square hole dug in the ground about 30 feet deep covered with a roof. The ice was preserved by filling in layers of sawdust between the cakes. On February 15, 1899, Coulter stored in it 14½ two-horse wagon loads of ice, hewn from his pond on Cold Water Creek, which he had built some five years earlier.

Within a few years he added to his residence a pantry, extended his front porch, dug and walled up a cellar under his kitchen and pantry, and added a toilet and bathroom when he extended running water into the house. It seems that at first, Coulter got his water from his nearest neighbors (the Ennises on the north and the Dorseys on the southwest); but with a mind alert to any need, Coulter had been eyeing a spring to the southward across Cold Water Creek, and he had not been living in his new home more than a year before he made an agreement with Joe Dorsey, who owned that spring, to give Coulter an easement over his land for the planting of a pipe to run the water to Coulter's home by gravitation. For this right Coulter first paid Dorsey \$1.00 a quarter but renegotiated it in 1896 for a total cost of \$1.00 "and other considerations." In 1900 after Calvin Abee had bought this land containing the spring, Coulter paid him \$3.00 for



the pipe-line rights. This water system was not wholly satisfactory, for although the pipes were buried a foot underground, there were certain exposed places (where the pipe crossed the creek and where it emerged in Coulter's yard) which froze and burst in extremely cold weather.

Even when Coulter was putting in his pipe line, he was investigating the possibilities of installing a hydraulic ram. In 1905 he bought one from the Gould Manufacturing Company of Seneca Falls, New York, and put it to work bringing water from the creek. By going far enough up the creek, he secured fall enough to force the water onto his porch. With a seventeen foot head of water the ram would force a stream to an altitude of 120 feet. Even the ram was not always dependable, for in winter weather it might freeze up, despite the fact that it was enclosed in a roofless rock house. Also at any time of the year the ram might become "water logged" (that is the air chamber might be filled with water), in which case the ram had to be drained before it would work again. As another solution to his water needs Coulter dug a well, to a depth of almost 100 feet, and put in a system of drawing the water in two buckets, on each end of a rope which went over a grooved wheel operated by a hand crank. Sometimes the rope would break, and then with grappling hooks the buckets would have to be fished out. When electricity came to Connelly Springs, Coulter had his house wired; and now it was possible to put an electric force pump in the well to bring the water out. But even so, occasionally the well had to be cleaned out to maintain the purity of the water, and with all precautions surface water managed to seep in after prolonged spells of rainy weather. With the coming of bored wells, the final solution of Coulter's water problem was reached. Leaving the old well as it was, he had a well bored nearby and another electric pump put in, and from that time on there were no impurities in the well, and it took an extremely dry summer to prevent a full supply of water from being had.

With their house completed the Coulters (there were now four children, the latest being Laura Elvira, born at the Stewart Place) began life in their new home on 24½ acres, but John Ellis, ever mindful of his slogan that no more land was being made, decided that 24½ acres was not enough for him. He soon began extending his boundaries on all sides from this nucleus. Within less than a year (April 21, 1894) he bought from his neighbor Joe Dorsey 11 6/10 acres, lying on up the road toward Dorsey's house. He paid \$117 for it. The next year he bought from Sylvanus Deal 35 acres extending southward into the South Mountains, paying him \$2.00 an acre.

In 1897 Coulter went heavily into extending his boundaries, mostly in adjoining South Mountain lands. He bought three tracts of this land from Sylvanus Deal: 150 acres and the acreage of another tract not given but by implication 25 acres for \$350; and  $140\frac{3}{4}$  acres for \$193. From John Shoup he bought 160 acres, paying \$220, and from W. A. Wilson,  $32\frac{1}{2}$  acres for \$44.15. This same year he bought from J. M. and Ida Sides 4 acres lying near his residence, paying \$45.93 for it.

Filling out a corner near where his pipe line emerged from the Dorsey Spring, Coulter bought in 1899 for \$6.57 a tract of  $4\frac{3}{8}$  acres, from Calvin Abee, who had succeeded to the Joe Dorsey lands. Two years later Coulter bought from Jack Deal (administrator of the estate of his father Sylvanus, who had died in 1899)  $409\frac{1}{4}$  acres of South Mountain land for \$1.00 an acre. This same year (1901) Coulter bought from Clarence L. Wilson 20 acres for \$1.50 an acre. This land joined Coulter's holdings. In 1902 Coulter bought from J. M. (Jeff) Cannon 90 acres for \$160. Coulter was not yet through buying land from J. M. and Ida Sides. In 1904 he bought  $1\frac{3}{4}$  acres for \$40.00, and the next year,  $10\frac{1}{2}$  acres for \$150. These two tracts joined his other land. The next year James L. Battle sold Coulter  $60\frac{3}{4}$  acres for \$103.75. This land lay eastward down the railway on the south side and approached Coulter's main tract. Thus by 1905 Coulter had accumulated land joining his original purchase, amounting in all to 1,179 acres.

To bolster his contemplated farming activities, Coulter bought in 1897 from Mrs. A. E. ("Myra," the widow of William W.) Connelly  $144\frac{3}{4}$  acres for \$8.00 an acre. She had originally asked \$10.00. This land lay northwest of the village, on the road to Rutherford College. It was to become one of Coulter's principal farming areas. Coulter did not conform to the principle reputed to a great Georgia planter, who said "I want only that land next to mine," but he liked to add tracts contiguous to what he had. So, in 1903, he bought from the County Board of Education a tract of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  acres for \$60.00, known as the "Huffman grave yard," which land had been the site of an early schoolhouse belonging to the county. It extended northward from the railroad and joined the "Connelly Place." Adding to the north side, in 1905 Coulter bought from J. R. Connell  $\frac{7}{8}$  of an acre for \$4.50 and the next year  $49\frac{3}{4}$  acres for \$1,025.

On beyond, in Rutherford College he bought from Dr. R. D. Jennings in 1901 a tract of 2 acres for \$55.00. And beyond the College and lying on both sides of Cold Water Creek near where it entered the Catawba River, he bought the "Hamlen Place" from J. D. Hamlen, 354 acres for \$1,239.

Some miles south of Morganton near Enola, in the South Mountain hills, Coulter bought in 1908 from R. L. Wilson 50 acres at \$10.00 an acre. In Connelly Springs, he bought small tracts on both sides of the railroad, in 1896, 1898, 1899, and 1901; and in 1906 he bought a small lot from H. C. ("Hard," "Highpockets") Williams. His most extensive purchase of land lying in the village (or on its outskirts) was 10 acres at \$15.00 an acre from J. M. Sides. This land lay on the south side of the railroad and east of the depot; part of it came to be known as the "cotton mill hill." Besides acquiring a dwelling house or two in the village, Coulter came into possession of a small house on Bailey Street in Asheville. This house, not being in a desirable section of the city, was by 1904 completely torn down by neighbors who used it for firewood. Coulter sold the lot to his friend Revell for \$60.00.

House rent did not come very high in Connelly Springs. In 1900 Coulter was renting a house to Bill Griffin for \$1.50 a month. On "cotton mill hill" he had several houses, which years later he was renting for little more, and he was finding great difficulty in collecting the rent, insignificant as it was.

This recital of Coulter's real estate does not include all which he owned at one time or another; but it indicates his attitude toward the axiom that there was no more land being made. And of what he owned he was not selfish in keeping any special part of it from a purchaser whose situation made it very desirable for him to buy it. Over to the eastward from his home, Coulter sold in the Mart Lowman vicinity two small tracts in 1897 and 1904 to Jim Lowman and two acres to Sarah Ann Bowman—also in 1905 for \$10.00 an acre, 15 acres to Port Berry. Also he sold land to W. H. and Gib Perkins, to Joe Berry, Bob Ennis, Jule Ingle, and to Willis Ervin. In the Rutherford College neighborhood he sold to Dr. T. V. Goode a small tract, and eventually he disposed of the "Hamlen Place." Among the last land sales he made was a small tract of "mountain land" on Cold Water Creek, to Claude Sides, a son of J. M. Sides, with whom Coulter had had many dealings.

Coulter's residence and the yard thereabouts were the special dominion of Lucy Ann, his wife, whom he called Annie. She ruled with a gentle hand inside the house and out, and she was about equally interested in both realms. She would have felt lost without a garden, flowers, fowls—and, of course, the cow. In addition to common garden products such as beans, cabbage, tomatoes, squashes, cucumbers, pumpkins, potatoes, cantaloupes, sweet corn, sugar peas, egg plant, rhubarb (pie plant), and lettuce, she always kept around the edges sage, horse radish, mint, catnip, parsley, and coriander.



She prided herself in having something from her garden early in the season. The county newspaper reported in 1897 that her cabbage had headed and was ready for the table on the 6th of June, and in 1906 it noted that Mrs. J. E. Coulter had roasting ears on June 26th. In common with housewives of her generation, she would have been deprived of a common item of conversation or a subject to write about in corresponding with her friends and kindred, if she had had no "hens setting" or hens with so many "peepies," or how many eggs she gathered on a certain day. In addition to chickens Lucy Ann raised some turkeys and a few guineas. Turkeys were hard to raise since they "stole out" their nests and were hard to locate until the hen appeared with her flock. If in the meantime a big rain had fallen, probably most of the little ones had drowned. In 1897, having found a turkey nest in time and secured the hen and her eggs to be set in a safe place, Lucy Ann was greatly surprised to find that the hen came off her nest with 18 little turkeys when only 17 eggs had been placed in the nest. This was news for the county newspaper. No explanations were offered, as for instance, Lucy Ann might have miscounted the eggs or maybe the old hen was not "done laying" and had deposited another egg in the nest. Guineaas were of little or no economic value. They were ornamental to have around to look at and to hear their "pot-rack, pot-rack" when they were not miles away on their daily roamings. To actually find a guinea nest was news for the whole neighborhood if not for the county press. Guinea eggs were not eaten, but around Easter times they were in great demand by children who wanted them to "fight Easter eggs" in contests in which as they struck the little ends of the eggs together and the one whose egg was cracked had to give it up to the winner. Guinea eggs were harder to crack than chicken eggs, and though they were smaller, attempts were made to conceal the fact that they were guinea eggs.

Lucy Ann was greatly interested in flowers, the potted ones as well as those to be set out in the yard. Neighbors were always interested in exchanging cuttings. Lucy Ann had a flower pit with a glass top and shutters where in the winter she kept her potted flowers from freezing.

Lucy Ann insisted in doing the light washing and laundering, using a washing machine and wringer (and sometimes merely a wash board), bought from Dodge & Zuill of Syracuse, New York. The heavier washing was done by Suze Ingle, but more generally by Marthy Ervin (wife of Willis). In the 1890's a washerwoman got 25¢ or 35¢ a day with her lunch.

There was much house work to be done, for the Coulter family

was steadily increasing, three more children having been born in the new residence: Ray Daniels, March 11, 1895; William Bryan, October 22, 1896; and Herbert Lee, October 11, 1899. During ordinary times Lucy Ann insisted on having no servants—they would be in her way. Not until she was in her eighties would she agree to have a servant. She made most of the clothing for her children, using a "Standard" machine, manufactured by the Standard Sewing Machine Company of Cleveland, Ohio.

Before electricity came, kerosene lamps were used, lamps hanging from the ceiling as well as those placed on tables and mantelpieces. Various types of lamps were used. The Angle lamp, made by the Angle Manufacturing Company of New York, was spherical and was made of a bronze-colored metal and was swung down from the ceiling. It had wicks on opposite sides to give greater brilliance. Then there were other lamps with a fluorescent mantle, which gave a much whiter light.

There were open fireplaces in all the rooms, but only in the main living room was a constant fire kept going in the winter throughout the day until bed time. The children, who got up in the cold bed rooms and dressed, hastened by the voice of John Ellis shouting "stir out," bounced down the stairway to be welcomed by a roaring fire. Breakfast consisted generally of eggs, hot biscuits, rice and gravy, ham or bacon, and occasionally steak with a rich thick cream gravy. There was no coffee or tea, but always plenty of milk. Only when there was company (and always when there was a grandmother of the children) was coffee served. Lucy Ann greatly enjoyed preparing meals. Some of her specialties were persimmon pudding (never widely known and almost a lost art after her passing), hot slaw (not a salad but a main dish, cooked with vinegar and cream), "stickies" (rolled up dough highly seasoned with sweets and grated nutmeg, baked with a delectable coating of syrupy sweets which had oozed out and crusted on top). No one was ever able to cook string beans or creamed corn equal to what Lucy Ann could do.

The smokehouse, which contained many of the good things which went on Lucy Ann's table burned in 1895, and only by good luck did the residence not catch fire. This was the very first of Coulter's series of fires. In answer to a letter of condolence from his father Philip Augustus, John Ellis wrote, "Yes, my smokehouse etc. burned up together with much general household goods but I don't mind that. I will have to work the harder and try to make it back."

Screen doors could not keep out the pestiferous housefly, but there were ways to fight it when it came inside. The fly-brush was always handy at mealtime to be wielded by someone, and there was the



"Tanglefoot Sticky Fly Paper," which could be spread out at all times. It came in double sheets stuck together, and when pulled apart (an operation which children always liked to perform) two sheets were ready to catch the flies. According to the promotional advertisement, it was "really the only device known that will catch and hold both the fly and the germ and coat them both over with a varnish from which they never escape, preventing their reaching your person or food."

For the sick and ailing, there were many home remedies which generally prevented the necessity of sending for the doctor. One remedy which was always used successfully for the dangers of lock-jaw from injuries by rusty nails was the application of turpentine and smoking the wound with woolen rags. There was a physician engaging in general practice living in the village or in its environs. It was an unheard of thing to go to a hospital to see a doctor or seldom to a doctor's office. If a person went to a hospital (and none was nearer than Statesville or Asheville for a long time), it was because he needed surgery or had plenty of money. Those physicians best remembered were Dr. R. L. Lattimore, who was in Connelly Springs when Coulter arrived or soon thereafter and who later moved to Greensboro; Dr. McG. Anders; and Dr. T. V. Goode. On call these "country" doctors with their long-coupled black satchels filled with little bottles of medicine, made visits to homes, summer and winter, in fair weather or foul, day or night. Dr. R. D. Jennings was the village dentist until 1899, when he moved to Banner Elk in present Avery County. He was a tall, serious-looking man, with an unlit cigar in his mouth when not at work. People generally visited dentists' offices for service; but Dr. J. J. Hicks of Mull Grove, who in 1896 filled a tooth for Coulter for 50¢, would at intervals bring his drilling machine to Coulter's home in Connelly Springs and engage in practice for a week or two.

Lucy Ann was a home-loving person, who never felt she could visit very far away from home or for more than a few days as long as she had small children in the household—to her kindred in Catawba County or all within a day on a trip to Hickory for some special trading. Only after her family grew up and moved away did she make visits to points outside the state—to Texas, Florida, Washington, D. C., and to visit a sister who lived in Waynesboro, Virginia.

Lucy Ann was always the first to grab the *Newton Enterprise* or the *Morganton News-Herald* to read aloud the news of interest; and she was the center of attention as she read to the family certain syndicated articles which regularly appeared in the larger state papers. Those which were special favorites were Frank G. Carpenter's



accounts of his travels, and the trials and tribulations of the Bowsers in which Mr. Bowser always came out second best to Mrs. Bowser. In the evenings John Ellis was likely to do a good deal of his sleeping sitting up in his chair, but never while Carpenter or the Bowsers were holding forth. The Bowser sketches appeared in book form in 1902 under the title of *The Life and Troubles of Mr. Bowser*.

Lucy Ann was a firm believer in the adage: Spare the rod and spoil the child. Very seldom did she ever use the "rod" (at most a peachtree switch) for when she corrected a child or asked it to do something or not to do something, that was sufficient. A favorite expression of her's for children was "chaps," or "young 'uns." Some of the expressions which had come down to her, which she would use were: "Come easy, go easy--got it by grubbing," "Jump the broom handle" (for marrying), "Dance at your wedding" (thanks for having been done a favor). She remembered much lore, humorous and otherwise, that had been in her family perhaps for generations, as: A simpleton who was being tried for having killed a sheep, not his own, testified that the brute had come at him with its mouth open, and that he would kill any man's sheep before he would let it bite him.

One of the jokes that long persisted in the Coulter family related to Calvin Abee, who was the first neighbor up the road. Frequently as he would walk down the road to town, he would stop to have a little friendly chat. On one occasion he remarked, "You will not see me walking up and down this road very often any more. I saw in the papers where you could get a bicycle free, and I ordered me one. I also ordered one for Fin [his son]." Calvin was probably jokingly referring to the advertisements of something being free, until the small print indicated that the reader would have to do some important things before the "free something" could be had.

A favorite story, which seems to have been true and often repeated by John Ellis, related to an old gentleman who had two homely daughters, somewhat up in years, and a mischievous son. On one evening two friends of the girls called to see them. The old gentleman was so elated that he spread the news the next morning: "Two big bucks at my house last night. Soon there will be no one here but I, Rene (his wife) and Bunyan." Bunyan liked to disturb his father by playing tricks. He would tie a sewing thread to a shoe at the foot of the bed and conceal the thread so that when he pulled it the shoe would move. The old gentleman would say, "See that shoe move, Bunyan? That's the works of the devil."

With a restless energy and ideas and plans galore, Coulter began developing the lands beyond Lucy Ann's domain. Cold Water Creek

ran down through the middle of good bottom land, overflowing its banks when big rains came. He decided to put a stop to this and rescue the land for farming. He put Willis Ervin and other hands to digging a channel around the south edge of these bottoms, over against the hill, and turning the creek into this new channel. After blasting away at one point, they opened up a mineral spring of excellent water. Coulter developed this spring and made it a source of healing waters for those who could endure its taste and were willing to walk a quarter mile for a good drink—and perchance bring back a jug full. To rescue some of this bottom land which was too swampy for farming, Coulter set workmen to digging drainage ditches, some to be lined with timbers resting on the bottom (known as blind ditches) and others to be supplied with Pomona Terra-Cotta tilings.

Having played with the creek by transferring it to the hillside, to keep it there in high water Coulter had a rock wall laid at weak places. But he was not through with attending to the creek. About 1894 he built a dam across it and made a pond. The dam was made by filling in dirt between two rock walls, set far enough apart to allow the dam to serve as a roadway. Whether or not this pond had been designed as a fish pond, Coulter soon stocked it with German carp, which his father Philip Augustus gave him. The pond served as a great attraction for the Coulter children and their neighbors, engaging in boating, swimming, and feeding the fish with bread to see them come up, breaking the surface of the water. Infrequently the Baptists used the pond for baptising their converts.

Most of the land lying to the southward of his residence and across the creek, Coulter enclosed in barbed-wire fences. This land was used for a cow pasture, and was divided into two parts, the "big pasture" lying on beyond the one nearest his home. Milch cows were not allowed in the "big pasture," because they were likely to stray too far away to be found easily. Coulter bought most of his barbed wire from the Cincinnati Barbed Wire Fence Company, also getting some from the Pittsburgh Steel Company. In putting up such fences staple pullers and wire splicers and stretchers were necessary tools. In fencing woodlands, few posts were necessary, since there were generally trees to which the wire could be nailed. For fields near his home Coulter used almost exclusively picket fences, and here it was necessary to erect posts in holes made with a post-hole digger, which could be had from the Eureka Fence Manufacturing Company of Richmond. Some of the gates which he used for his barn lot and fields were "Cant-Snag," which he bought from Rowe Manufacturing Company of Galesburg, Illinois. Coulter made very few plank fences.

Picket fences were made by weaving palings or pickets between



two strands of smooth wire at the top and two at the bottom. A shuttle twisted the wires for each picket, and a workman with a wooden maul knocked the picket up to the preceding one, leaving a space of about three inches between the pickets. This type of fence did not seem to be very widely known, for Benjamin Pearson, Jr. of the Byfield Snuff Company, Byfield, Massachusetts, who on a visit to Connelly Springs had seen Coulter's picket fences, upon his return north wrote Coulter wanting to know how he made the fence. He also thanked Coulter "for the good time you gave us while in your country" and asked him to "kindly give my regards to all the friends which I made in your pretty village, who were so kind to us all."

All of Coulter's home-place lands were in forests when he bought them, with the exception of the "Sook bottom," which lay along the "Sook branch" where it ran into Cold Water Creek, and a hillside clearing, where a family of Negroes had once lived but were at this time resting in a little graveyard, overgrown with cedar and aspen trees. The name "Sook" came from Sook (or Sukey) Connelly, who was the head of the family.

Coulter was soon clearing land as far as the creek, first with choppers, grubbers, and burners of brush; but for the many stumps which were left, he used a stump-puller, bought from the Union Grubber Company of Sigourney, Iowa. Another one he bought from Hercules Manufacturing Company of Centerville, Iowa. The necessary wire cable he bought from these companies and also from John A. Roebling's Sons Company of Trenton, New Jersey. So successful was Coulter in clearing his land, that he wrote an account of his stump pulling for the *Practical Farmer*, published in Philadelphia. This article aroused widespread interest throughout the country. Wanting further information, people wrote to him from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, West Virginia, Illinois, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Alabama. Coulter was the first and only one in the vicinity of Connelly Springs to use this method of clearing land.

As if he was not already deep in the lumber and mercantile businesses, Coulter was going about his farming with as much vision and vigor as he displayed in his other enterprises. Remembering what was best from the past, he was learning from experiments and from information he was getting in answer to inquiries addressed to the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and to farm papers. What crops might best follow what crops, the value of inoculating seeds, how to keep smut out of wheat and oats, how to get rid of oyster-shell scales on apple trees, how best to prepare land for various crops, what were the best soil builders, and sending samples of his soils to



see what would improve it—these and many other questions he raised in his inquiries. He subscribed for various farm papers, the *Practical Farmer* and the *Progressive Farmer* being his favorites. Also he received many United States Department of Agriculture bulletins and their annual reports back as far as 1886, and yearbooks as these reports were later called. A member of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture wrote to him in 1905, "I am glad to know that you are so much interested in improved agriculture."

He soon developed a reputation for being ahead of all other farmers in his vicinity along almost every line of agriculture; and people were as assiduously plying him for information as he ever was in obtaining it for himself. A farmer in Four Oaks, North Carolina, wanted information about velvet beans, "how they grow, how to plant them, will they pay on poor sandy land." Dr. W. M. McGalliard, a physician of Donaldsonville, Louisiana, wanted information on the use of dynamite in farming, breaking up land, making ditches, and so on. He said he supposed that Coulter was using it, "that, as usual, you are ahead of all farmers in finding out and getting the best results from your land." *Southern Farming*, which was published in Atlanta, wanted Coulter to contribute articles describing his farming methods. Governor W. W. Kitchin of North Carolina appointed him annually in succession from 1909 to 1912 to be a delegate to the Farmers' National Congress, meeting in various cities—in Columbus, Ohio, in 1911. There is no record that he attended any of these congresses—too busy with his many enterprises.

Methods of farming were, of course, tied in closely with farm machinery. Coulter began early to use a sub-soil plow to bring up deep-lying soil to mix with top-soil. This operation would improve the land and give rain a chance to soak in deeper, and thus preserve moisture and prevent top-soil from washing away. Also he began using disc plows and especially the reversible type, which would allow hill-side plowing without going up or down hill. Coulter used the "Avery's Reversible Disc Plow," manufactured by B. F. Avery & Sons of Louisville, Kentucky. For breaking up clods he used dirt rollers, made of steel and sold by The Lehr Agricultural Company of Fremont, Ohio, and also by A. Buch's Sons of Elizabethton, Pennsylvania. For breaking up the soil still further, he used pulverizing harrows, generally the "Acme," made by Duane H. Nash, Millington, New Jersey, and disc harrows, made by The Thomas Manufacturing Company of Springfield, Ohio. For grain reapers and binders he dealt with D. M. Osborne & Company of Philadelphia. He used the "Cole Seed Planter and Fertilizer," made by the Cole Manufacturing Company of Charlotte. For various kinds of farm machinery he dealt with

the Chattanooga Plow Company; the International Harvester Company of Chicago; Rock Island Plow Company; J. I. Case of Racine, Wisconsin; the Champion Drill Company of Avon, New York; and the Ontario Drill Company of East Rochester, New York.

Coulter was the first to begin terracing his land with wide ridges, which were cultivated just like the rest of his land. For long terraces which might collect enough water to start overflowing, he built at a low point in the terrace about half its length, an underground outlet made by burying large Terra-Cotta tiling to run straight down the hill.

For improving the fertility of his soil, he used commercial fertilizers and stable manures. Also he applied ground lime rock to correct the acidity in soil, for practically no crop thrived on an acid soil. There were, of course, other ways he used in improving his soil. He sowed clover and cow peas to be plowed under, and he rotated crops. During his last farming days he learned of a plant which was being raised in Florida, called *crotalaria*, which was "the finest summer legume ever discovered and the cheapest method of fertilizing and building up soil." But it came too late for his use, and by 1962 it was considered a noxious weed which should be exterminated, for its seeds contaminated any grain with which it got mixed and might bring about the death of animals which ate it.

For practically his whole farming life, Coulter depended on horses and mules for power. Generally he kept about a half dozen and a special riding horse for himself. He did a good deal of swapping, buying, and selling; sometimes he dealt with Henkel-Craig Live Stock Company of Hickory and Lenoir. For livestock remedies and for other information, he frequently wrote to Tait Butler, the state veterinarian, in the Department of Agriculture at Raleigh; but formerly a founder and editor of *Southern Farm Gazette*, Starkville, Mississippi, and a frequent contributor to the *Progressive Farmer*. As for the best feed for horses and mules, in addition to corn and roughness (fodder), Coulter was informed that cotton seed meal was excellent if stock could be taught to eat it, pea meal also was excellent, as well as wheat bran and shorts. As a tonic Coulter included a good deal of the patented International Stock Food Remedies. He bought from Couch Brothers Manufacturing Company of Senoia, Georgia, a dozen patent horse collars, which did away with pads and would "cure or prevent galls or sore shoulders." For special equipment in training horses "Prof. Jesse Beery" of Pleasant Hill, Ohio, bombarded Coulter with his leaflets advertising his items, such as special bits and books. Most of his horses and mules were shod by Jack Deal, a blacksmith living a mile or two to the westward. Also George and Bill



Aiken, with a shop about the same distance to the eastward, did some shoeing for Coulter.

In 1899 one of Coulter's horses got so badly crippled that it had to be shot. He buried it near an apple tree, thus, according to the *Morganton Herald*, "utilizing him to the farthest extent."

In 1920 he bought a farm tractor, being one of the first two farmers in Burke County to do so; but the tractor was none too satisfactory and he continued to do most of his farming with horses and mules.

The main crops which Coulter planted were wheat and corn. No stalk of cotton ever grew on his land, not because he had any prejudice against this staple, but because Burke County was not in the cotton belt. Other important crops were oats, rye, and pea hay. He listed in 1915 in a report to the United States Department of Agriculture the following crops: corn, 25 acres; wheat, 30; oats, 40; rye, 25; Irish potatoes,  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre; sweet potatoes,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ; hay, 25; peanuts,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ; beans,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ; all others, 5. As soon as his peas were harvested he planted oats on the same land. This was generally in early September. He was a great believer in cow peas; they loosened the soil and added nitrogen to it; and they were good for hay and for seeds. Rye was sown about the same time as oats. Around 1918 Coulter became greatly interested in a special variety of rye, called Abruzzi. People from Virginia to Texas wrote him inquiring about it. Coulter generally cut off his corn, shocked it, and then hauled it in to be shucked and shredded by machinery. Occasionally he had fodder and the ears pulled in the field. Threshers with their machine pulled by a wood-burning traction engine came once a year to thresh his grain crops. It was always necessary to know a few days ahead when they were coming and how many meals the hands accompanying the machine would have at the Coulter residence. Those were busy times for Lucy Ann and what help she could stir up. Any grapes or fruits in vineyard or orchard were looked upon by the threshers as theirs—and it was always a relief when these plunderers left.

There was a variety of crops which Coulter became interested in and raised for a time, and some of these he was the first to introduce into the neighborhood. Among the beans his favorite was the soy-bean, also called soja and soya, there being at least four varieties: yellow, green, brown, and black. They were described by a Richmond seed-man as "the coming forage and self-improving crop" and "one of the largest yielding crops grown." Coulter also raised mung beans, velvet beans, and some Tokio beans. Referring to velvet beans, Fred Peyronel of Valdese wrote, "I had a lot of them last year and I would



not like to be without for anything, as all the stock like it and grow fat on it too."

Coulter began raising hairy vetch for hay as early as 1901. The variety known as purple vetch had been imported from Naples, Italy in 1899; and as late as 1918, the United States Department of Agriculture was referring to it as "a new crop." Millett was another crop he planted for hay as early as 1899; but if allowed to grow to maturity it became too large and tough for hay. Coulter was a great believer in clover, all varieties he knew--white, red, crimson, and bush clover. Bush clover, also known as Japan clover or lespedeza, was a good soil-builder as well as a valuable forage and hay crop. He sowed rape now and then, principally for his hogs. This was a plant akin to the cabbage family, and it was a good cover crop for orchards. Every year a watermelon patch was set out with some cantaloupes and muskmelons. Sometimes an acre or more was planted in pumpkins, which were good both for man and beast.

Of course Coulter began an orchard and vineyard almost as soon as he began building his residence. In his orchard he had peaches, apples, pears, plums, quinces, damsons, cherries, mulberries, Japanese walnuts, and pecans. He planted some raspberries, but blackberries and dewberries came up of their own accord in any field or fence-row neglected for a few years. He bought most of his orchard plants from the Startown Nursery and the Catawba County Nursery Company in Newton and Maiden. Pests (insect--and human if trees were near a public roadway) were soon taking their tolls; and Coulter now had to begin spraying the former; the latter were not too devastating. He used Bordeaux mixture, Paris green, and arsenate of lead. Spray pumps he bought from Sydnor Pump & Well Company of Richmond, Virginia.

Thus, it is evident that life on the Coulter home place could never have been monotonous. It was close enough to town for whatever conveniences could be found there and far enough away to offer the variety and flavor of life which only the country could give. Pity the boy amidst the maddening cry of the city, who did not know which end of a cow gave milk or what a hame-string was for.

## CHAPTER IX

### STOCKMAN

NO intelligent person would attempt to run a farm without having on it livestock in addition to his work animals. Coulter had his horses and mules for plowing and wagoning; and his wife Lucy Ann always had a cow or two and a pig. With all his land, opportunities were at hand for breeding livestock in sufficient numbers to make it a business in itself. Very early he began raising and selling hogs, and as time went on he added sheep, goats, and cattle. Poultry might well have been an interest of Lucy Ann's, but she was content with a small flock of chickens, some turkeys, and a few guineas—the chickens for their eggs, and hens and pullets for the pot and frying pan. Turkeys came in handy around Thanksgiving and Christmas times, and as has already been noted guineas were more for adding variety and to be looked at when they were around—they were bad to wander afar. But Coulter was not content with this smattering; he added poultry to his list of livestock, and when Lucy Ann had none to part with, he bought what was necessary to fill his orders.

By 1900 Coulter was becoming conscious of the possibilities of adding an extensive livestock business to his enterprises. To his letterhead, which had previously carried his lumber and mercantile businesses he now added, "Breeder of Thoroughbred Short Nosed Essex Hogs." A year or two later a letterhead announced an increasing interest in livestock, but still playing second fiddle to his lumber business: "Breeder of Thoroughbred Essex and Berkshire Hogs, Angora Goats and Guernsey and Holstein Cattle." By the year 1906 he was using a special letterhead emphasizing livestock, and relegating his lumber business to "small print," but it must not be assumed that he was letting up on lumber. Never having given a name to his estate, he now called the livestock part of it Cold Water Creek Stock Farm, "Breeder and Shipper of Registered Short-Nosed Essex Swine,

Registered Big Boned Yorkshire Swine, Registered Berkshire Swine, Grade Pigs for Slaughter, a Cross Between Poland China and Berkshire. Etc. I also breed Angora and Common Goats, Sheep and Cattle." By 1910 he had made further progress in his livestock business. He adopted a new name for his farm, now calling it Mountain Oak Stock Farm, with this listing of his holdings, "Breeder and Shipper of Registered Short Nosed Black Essex, also Poland-Chinas, Berkshires, Duroc Jerseys and grades. Have sows in farrow, service boars and pigs of all kinds at all times. Purebred Angora Goats, Mammoth Bronze Turkeys, White Plymouth Rock and White Wyandotte Poultry." He emphasized in red ink the following policy: "Important Notice—All Stock Sold Subject to Approval. On receipt of same at your station, if not satisfactory, uncrate (if necessary) feed and water, wire, phone or write me. I will send shipping instructions, pay return charges and return money."

There were certain terms which were applied exclusively to swine. "In farrow" meant that the sow was "with pigs," that is that she would "drop a litter of pigs." A "shote (shoat)" was a young hog without regard to sex; a "gilt" was a young sow; and a "barrow" was a male hog castrated before it reached sexual maturity.

Coulter was a great believer in advertising his livestock, the products of his mills, and anything else he had to sell. He lumped all together but the emphasis now was on livestock. His favorite advertising medium was the *Progressive Farmer* (both the Carolina and Virginia editions). Also he advertised in the *Practical Farmer*, the *American Swineherd*, the *Southern Cultivator*, the *Southern Ruralist*, the *Southern Agriculturist*, the *Charlotte Observer*, the *Raleigh News and Observer*, the *Farm Life Bulletin* of Richmond, the *Montgomery Daily Times*, and the *Tampa Tribune*. He did not neglect the small county newspapers, the *Morganton News-Herald* being his favorite for Burke County, and the *Lenoir Topic* for Caldwell County. It was the custom for newspapers to clip an advertisement from some other newspaper and send it to the person whose advertisement they had clipped and quote their rates. Then, there were advertising agencies offering to run advertisements in a group of papers. In 1916 such an agency offered to run Coulter's livestock advertisement of 25 words eight times in ten South Carolina papers for \$5.00. A free advertisement medium was provided by the Southern Railway Company to increase traffic along their lines. They issued at intervals the *Southern Railway System Development Service* and their *Livestock Bulletin*, both being pamphlets which listed the names and addresses of lumbermen and stockmen and noting what they had to sell.

These advertisements paid so well that Coulter was soon known



far and wide as a stockman. County agents and banks promoting Pig Clubs frequently called on him for pigs; and the *Progressive Farmer* in offering pigs as prizes in the promotion of its circulation frequently bought them from Coulter. And, of course, people "from the ends of the earth" began ordering livestock. He shipped pigs to customers from Virginia to Iowa and California, but his main trade was with people living in North Carolina, though Virginia and South Carolina were not far behind. He shipped pigs to a Mr. Von Eberstein of Chocowinty, North Carolina, and to other Tar Heel towns with such unusual names as Bear Wallow, Roaring River, Hominy Creek, Bat Cave, Horse Shoe, Banner Elk, Pine Lever, Pine Town, Pink Hill, Rocky Point, Cash Corner, Gum Neck, Mount Holly, Laurel Hill, Slick Rock, Pee Dee, Sunshine, Joy, and Worry. Of course, he shipped much to towns with more conventional names.

Coulter got so many orders and inquiries that he was swamped—and just like Lucy Ann, who would have no servants, so he would think it preposterous to have a secretary. In this situation he resorted to a form letter in which he listed the stock he had to sell with the prices and further information which he thought might answer many of his inquirers. He got out new ones as prices and holdings changed. One of these early circular letters began, "In mailing you this circular letter, I hope to answer your inquiry. I get so many inquiries that I haven't time to answer all by letter. If your inquiry calls for something not answered in this you will find a P. S. at the bottom of this letter or on the opposite side, SO LOOK FOR IT." In one of these letters he listed not only his various breeds of swine and their prices, but also a Jersey bull, two mares, a variety of peas and beans, sorghum seed, and various strains of poultry.

A Tar Heel farmer wrote Coulter informing him that he had received the circular letter, "and believe me, dear sir, it was good reading to me. It did me good to read about a farmer of N. C. having that much livestock etc. for sale." Prices varied from the old country custom of a "pig for a dollar" to one for \$5.00 by 1905. In 1915 he was offering "Essex pigs, purebred and registered at \$10.00 each," and later he was asking \$15.00. At certain times he advertised Essex, Hampshire, Poland-China, and Duroc Jersey pigs when two months old at \$12.50, or when four months old, \$15.00. Second choice pigs brought \$8.00, he announced in 1915, and as for runts, "I sell the runts, when I have any, for porkers to the neighbors who can see them and pay what they think they are worth." In 1918 he was selling brood sows from \$50.00 to \$85.00. Boars sold for somewhat less, generally from \$50.00 to \$60.00. All these prices were for stock which could be registered. Porkers or grade hogs always sold for

less, sometimes for 10¢ a pound on foot. In describing a hog for excellence, he used such expressions as this: "Well marked, quite gentle, and no bad traits." Great store was put on the appearance of a thoroughbred; the slightest markings from normal might prevent a sale. In offering a gilt (young sow) Coulter explained: "She is large for her age and a bargain; has one defect—a few white hair on white [right?] foot, but is the lineal descendant of registered stock as far back as I can trace her and the white hair on the foot is a sport I can't account for. There is not the slightest possibility that her pigs would be so marked."

Registering a hog meant giving its genealogical record back for three generations, a description of the animal, and the names of the previous owners. Many hog buyers put great emphasis on registration. The price for registration was generally one dollar. Each hog when registered received a name, chosen either by the buyer or by Coulter. Such names as these were used, whimsical or otherwise: Nick Longworth, Alice Roosevelt, Togo, Tom Watson, Cleopatra, Jim Crow, Betsy Crow, Rose of Lovelady, Suzy, Tar Heel King, Carolina Bess, Conover Chief, Princess V, Della, Laura, Ringmaster, Julia, Black Beauty, Ila Jones, Southern Belle, Harry, Martha, Fatty, Shannon, Fanny, Jim Suttle, Mildred, Prime, Miss Lucy, Lucy Ann, Mysta, and so on.

There were associations for the main breeds of hogs, which provided registration, and published booklets and yearbooks. Coulter belonged to all the associations registering breeds of hogs which he sold: the American Duroc Jersey Swine Association of Chicago; the American Hampshire Swine Record Association of Peoria, Illinois; the National Poland-China Record Company of Winchester, Indiana; and the American Essex Swine Association. F. M. Srout was the secretary and treasurer of this last-named group. He moved around considerably and as he was the principal officer, it may be said that the association moved with him.

In 1906 Srout was living in McLean, Illinois, and he finally ended up in New London, Iowa. Srout and Coulter became great friends and in their business correspondence (mostly registering Essex hogs for Coulter), they became quite chatty, though they never personally met each other. When anyone should write Srout inquiring about Essex hogs, he would refer them to Coulter. Srout was a farmer and often he would write a description of his farming operations, how many acres he had planted to various crops, how many bushels of wheat he made, and so on. In 1915 he reported 5,300 bushels of wheat and 6,000 bushels of oats. In 1916 he wrote Coulter, "I think Hughes [*sic*] will be our next President yet I dont hear many complaints



against Wilson." Later, when he moved to Iowa, in explaining his new location, he wrote that he would send "a few lines to find out how you are getting along and to find out how you are getting along with the Essex business and every thing else, and how you are pleased with the war." He now had an autotmobile, and he thought that he and his wife might "come through the South Touring," and he would come by to see Coulter. He died in September, 1919.

Srout, like Coulter, had "too many irons in the fire." Frequently he would wait months before filling out registration blanks for swine Coulter had sold to customers who were clamoring for their registration certificates. Other Essex dealers were having the same trouble. Taking advantage of this discontent, Reuben F. Abernethy of Mount Holly, decided to try to organize a rival association to be called the Union Essex Swine Association. Coulter was to be vice president; but he did not become interested, and all efforts to organize it failed. Srout, was, of course, much opposed and "poo-pooed" the idea. Writing in 1911 he said that two years ago Abernethy did not know anything about the registration business, that "he did not know B. from Apple Butter about Registering Stock & I think he dont know but very little about it yet." Coulter ear-marked many of his hogs with a button-like metal tag riveted into the hog's ear.

Soon Coulter was bestirring himself in assembling information on raising and caring for swine. He subscribed for the *American Swine-herd*, "Devoted to Swine Raising and Special Advocate of the Poland-China Breed, Progressive, Aggressive." Also he secured such booklets as these: *Pig Feeders' Manual*; *Care of Hogs*; *Progressive Scientific Feeding Formula for Fattening Hogs*; and bulletins issued by the United States Bureau of Animal Industry. His remedies came from H. W. Kellogg Co. of St. Paul, also he used "Dr. Hess' Stock Food" and "Dr. Lion's Stock Remedy," and the remedies put out by the International Stock Food Company of Minneapolis. He set up in his hog lot a Wasson's Patent Rubbing Post, "Kills Lice, Germs, Parasites," made by the Wasson Manufacturing Company of Peoria, Illinois. According to this company, "It is natural for a louse-infected hog to rub the places which irritates him. It is nature's own way of affording the hog relief. Why not let the hog apply the remedy by his own efforts and as he needs it?" This rubbing post was "a hollow cast iron tube four inches in diameter and about three feet high in which is placed a solid or heavy petroleum dip to be automatically applied on hogs to rid them of lice, mange mites and all other flesh-eating parasites." This company asserted that this method took the place of a dipping tank; but Coulter had also his dipping tank in which he used "Zenoleum Dip," made by the Zenner Disin-



fectant Company of Detroit; and "Lion's Imported Dip," made in England and imported by the Live Stock Remedy Company of St. Louis.

With all his gathering of information and his experience, Coulter soon became a sort of information bureau himself. People frequently wrote to him, wanting to know how and what to feed hogs; what breed of hogs was best for a given region; which grew biggest; which had the best meat; how to breed Essex hogs to get short noses; and what were the best remedies for hog diseases? The *Southern Agriculturalist* wanted him to become a member of their Advisory Board and to write occasionally about his farm and livestock. He was too busy to make any such commitments. One of his "home-grown" remedies which he often volunteered to customers when he sent them stock was: salt, sulphur, lime, and charcoal mixed up and kept where the hogs could reach it.

Most of Coulter's hog customers were better farmers than grammarians. Many of them had great difficulty in spelling hog breeds: "how minnie Pigs have that exic [Essex] Sow got"; "I want to no if [you] have any good Esake pigs now for sail"; "I like the way you talk so you will send me one pole and china pig [for] \$10." A Florida customer wanted a boar pig "that is if his nose is not too crooked"; another ordered "one Duroc sow pig first class in every respect, wide between the ears long bodied. Well I would like for it to look just like the photo on your envelope but I presume from his form he is a berk Shire." A prospective buyer wanted "to now if I could get a Mail Pig Seven are eight weeks old," and another emphasized, "I want a First Choice Pig I dont want no Runt Neither." A South Carolinian wrote in 1917, "I saw a Nice Little Black Pig from you today going through by Express and this is how I gotten your name. I would like to have Nice Little Black Pig to Eat the Scraps and Slops around the House. Would prefer A Big Pig already altered." A Tar Heel farmer who had had bad luck with his hogs wanted to start out again by buying some from Coulter. He wrote, "The collery have killed every hog I have got But 5 and among the lot was one fine registered Polinchiney Bore."

There was hardly anyone who did not want to know "your lowest price," "your best price," or "what is the least you will take." Many of his customers were as chatty in their letters as if they were his next-door neighbors. A Negro preacher in Virginia always signed himself, "Your Old Friend."

Hog cholera was a devastating scourge, which never reached Coulter's herd. His hogs, however, were tested ever so often to comply with state laws which required a health certificate for hogs shipped



**Gold Water Creek Stock Farm,**  
Connally Springs, N. C.

**J. E. COULTER, Proprietor,**  
— BREEDER AND SHIPPER OF —

**BERKSHIRE**  
— BREEDERS OF THOROUGHBRED ESSEX AND  
— BREEDERS OF THOROUGHBRED ESSEX AND  
— BREEDERS OF THOROUGHBRED ESSEX AND

**ESSEX and YORKSHIRE.**

**ROUGH AND FINISHED LUMBER, LATHS AND SHINGLES, FLOUR, MEAL, FARM IMPLEMENTS**  
— BREEDERS OF THOROUGHBRED ESSEX AND —  
— BREEDERS OF THOROUGHBRED ESSEX AND —  
— BREEDERS OF THOROUGHBRED ESSEX AND —

**J. E. COULTER**

**Connally Springs, N. C. 1906**

**Mountain Oak Stock Farm**  
— BREEDER AND SHIPPER OF —  
— BREEDERS OF THOROUGHBRED ESSEX AND —  
— BREEDERS OF THOROUGHBRED ESSEX AND —  
— BREEDERS OF THOROUGHBRED ESSEX AND —

**J. E. COULTER**

**Connally Springs, N. C.**

**ROUGH AND FINISHED LUMBER, LATHS AND SHINGLES, FLOUR, MEAL, FARM IMPLEMENTS**  
— BREEDERS OF THOROUGHBRED ESSEX AND —  
— BREEDERS OF THOROUGHBRED ESSEX AND —  
— BREEDERS OF THOROUGHBRED ESSEX AND —

**J. E. COULTER**

**Connally Springs, N. C.**





*Top:* SOUTHERN RAILWAY STATION. *Bottom:* HOOSIERS KNOB, LOOKING EAST FROM RAILWAY STATION; STANDPIPE IN FOREGROUND, COTTON MILL BEYOND.



*Top:* TRAIN APPROACHING CONNELLY SPRINGS FROM THE WEST. *Bottom:* SOUTH MOUNTAINS, HOOSIERS KNOB ON THE EXTREME LEFT.

in. Before crating his pigs for shipment he would give them a bath in Zenoleum water or some other disinfectant. Since some of his customers lived in far-off states or deep in the country miles away from a railway station, he was careful to notify them a few days before shipment when to expect them. He would tie onto the crate going a long distance a little sack of feed with this request which he hoped railway agents and other trainmen would heed: "Feed and water me. Corn in the sack." It took four days for a pig to reach Guyton, Georgia. A customer in Mineral Wells, Texas, wrote that he received the pig "all OK & think he is a dandy."

Coulter took considerable care in building up his herd. His best Essex stock he bought from Richard Peters' Stock Farm of Calhoun, Georgia, who was "one of the oldest Essex breeders." Coulter bought a Yorkshire sow from Bowmont Farms in Salem, Virginia, which "was bred by Sanders Spencer of Holywell Manor, St. Ives, England, and was imported when a pig by L. S. Cooper of Coopersburg, Pa." Also he bought another Yorkshire sow which came from England, paying \$50.00 for it. Frequently Coulter had more orders than he could fill; then he had to depend on suppliers whom he had located and in whom he had confidence, for often he had pigs which he had never seen, shipped direct from his suppliers to his customers. There was danger in this practice, for unless the supplier was very circumspect and thoroughly honest he might ship shabby stock, and cause Coulter's reputation as a stockman to fall. Some of his suppliers whom he could depend on were: Robert L. Abernethy, "Open View Farms," Mt. Island, North Carolina; T. L. Cook of Boone; P. H. Punch of Newton, "Grower and Shipper of Choice Sweet Potatoes and Strawberries"; H. C. Hargrove of Canton; M. E. Aderholt of Henry River; and Frederick W. (Fritz) Hossfeld of Morganton. In selling a sow in farrow, Coulter frequently would ask to have a few of the pigs reserved for himself. In one instance he made an agreement with the Blue Ridge Association, which ran a hotel in Black Mountain, whereby they would feed during the summer season thirty hogs and when they should be returned he would pay 4½¢ a pound for all weight taken on.

Coulter received many letters from enthusiastic customers thanking him for the excellent stock he had sent them. A county agent wrote, "I wish to say that I am well pleased with the pigs, and all who saw them have said the same." From Morehead City came these expressions by a pleased customer: "I think you wrote one of the kindest letters I ever rec'd . . . a thousand thanks to you. I am sure you are a Gentleman in the highest degree & I hope you are a Christian. Every bodie likes to deal with a man who will do just what he says. [The



hog] is the best that I ever saw." A purchaser in Leesburg, Georgia, said the sow which he had received from Coulter was "as fine as I have ever seen in any of the fairs of this state. I have shown her to several, and they think she is a beauty. I am very proud of her." A South Carolinian wrote that he had received the pig "all OK an i am please wid him an all those seed him ses he is the Best the ]they[ ever Saw." He wanted the pig named in the registration certificates "the King of dorchester." Another South Carolinian in bemoaning the loss of two pigs Coulter had sold him said, "They were Little Beauties. I have never lost any stock of any kind that hurt me as bad." A customer in Alabama wrote that the pigs had "arrived in fine condition . . . not worried over the trip seemingly. They are beauties so gentle & quiet." Up in the mountainous Republican country of North Carolina, a customer wrote that he liked the pig and facetiously added, "I think he is a republican except his color." Another mountain customer wrote from Toe Cane that the pigs were "all right and eat heartily and I think this mountain air will agree with them, they are purtty pigs Sure." Another mountaineer up in Caldwell County was well pleased: "Would be glad friend Coulter if you could run over to see me sometimes. I know you are a busy man, never-the-less tear loose the first opportunity and come. I am not fixed to treat you royally, but will do the best I can." From Alabama came this: "I wish to thank you for selecting and sending me such a nice one. Will be only too glad to recommend you and your hogs to any one if an opportunity affords itself."

The chorus of thanks continued: "as fine as split silk"; "Very much pleased with my pig. Many thanks," (a telegram); "beyond my expectations"; "he is a dandy"; "will Return my Thanks to you. I would not take Double the amount for pig"; "[thank] you very much for the nice pig you sent me & if I can do you any good I will be glad to do so for I find you to be an honest man"; "She brought me 45 pigs in two years"; "the finest Pigs I ever saw. Every body that have seen the Pigs says they are the nicest pigs they ever saw"; "are as nice as we could ask for"; "more than proud of him, he is a buty"; "as fine as a picture"; "would not take any thing for him"; "would not take twice what she cost me"; "more than pleased with King George . . . When you get Reddy to Have Circulars Printed let me no and I will give King George a big send off"; "the pig is going to make friends for you in this country [Virginia]"; "is just a pet and my children like her to a tea"; "like him fine, has good marks and well built"; and so it went on and on.

It would not have been true to human nature if every pig customer had been satisfied. A Floridian was pleased with his pigs but he was

a little disappointed because one did not "have a little white on the end of her nose" and the other did not "curl his tail." Another bought a sow, which brought him "10 fine pigs" but "the mother is the biggest chicken hog i ever saw." A complaint came from Pamlico County, on the coast: "I am sorrow to tell you the sow I bought of you is of no good, her first pigs is about 8 [weeks?] old, i have had them on a chufa patch about 3 weeks and they wont fatten, will dress about 40 lbs each, i thought i would get her to do better the next farrow so i bred her to my mammoth black boar" but the pigs in this litter were still "no count." The complainant did not take advantage of Coulter's standing invitation to return stock when not found satisfactory, and the next year he was buying another pig from Coulter. On very rare occasions a pig would be returned.

A complaint came in from a customer who thought that Coulter was slow in sending him registration papers for hogs he had bought from him. It turned out that Coulter had bought these hogs subject to registration, but had not exercised the right immediately, and when he tried to get the registration papers he was unable to locate the person who had originally sold the stock. The complainant became somewhat abusive and wrote to the *Progressive Farmer* in which he had seen Coulter's advertisement and wanted satisfaction. The paper replied: "Mr. Coulter has been an advertiser in The *Progressive Farmer* for a number of years and has sold hundreds and hundreds of things to our readers and this is the second complaint we have ever had. So for this reason we know that he has been delivering the goods, and has the reputation to maintain, which amounts to more than the pigs which he has just sold to you."

As has appeared, Coulter raised and sold several breeds of hogs; but his favorite for the longest time was the Essex. He considered the short-nosed black Essex "the all-round best small hog" and he quoted Tait Butler, whom he held to be the ultimate authority on matters relating to livestock: "In the South the Essex is undoubtedly the most popular of the (medium) or small breeds of swine and in size and habits seems especially well fitted for the existing conditions under which he is usually kept. The breed is of English origin and ranks about medium in size among the smaller breeds." They varied in weight from 300 to 400 pounds and on rare occasions an Essex would reach 700 pounds. They had smooth, compact square bodies, were black and without any marks whatever, and "must have short noses and small ears." In 1911 Coulter wrote: "I like the Essex better than any of the breeds I have ever handled, and I have tried most of the standard breeds. They are solid black in color, and don't break fences or kill chickens as some breeds do. They are quiet and civil,

and will keep on less feed and do well on less range than any hog I have ever known." He added, "Last and best of all they eat less than those of other breeds, and will fatten at any age, hence the Essex is called the poor man's ideal hog, and what is best for the poor man is surely best for the rich man."

Coulter's second choice of hog breeds was the Yorkshires. They were fine bacon hogs, lots of lean—more than any other breed. They were very prolific—sometimes as many as eighteen pigs in a litter. He bought a Yorkshire sow for \$67.00, and he sold her first litter for \$85.00—thus standing him \$18.00 less than nothing. Yorkshires were first imported into the United States in 1892. They were "large, strong, and vigorous, in fact the large Yorkshire is probably the largest of the breeds grown in America today." They were white in color. Coulter handled also the Poland-China, Berkshires, Duroc Jerseys, and the OIC's (Ohio's Improved Chester Whites).

In his livestock repertoire Coulter listed also sheep and goats. He made no specialty of sheep, though he had a flock of thirty or forty at times. There were hazards in raising sheep. In the early spring they ate the mountain ivy or mountain laurel which abounded in his mountain pastures. This shrub was poisonous to them, and unless drenched with special remedies, they were likely to die. Also dogs killed some of his sheep. In 1908 he received this inquiry: "i want to no if you have any Sheep for Sail." Now and then Coulter had a few sheep killed for their mutton. The hides with the wool on he had tanned and presented them to friends to be used as rugs. The wool which he clipped he generally had made into blankets or twisted into thread, though he sold some now and then. For processing his wool into blankets and thread he sent it to the Chatham Manufacturing Company of Elkin, the Catawba Woolen Mills of Plateau (formerly Keeversville), and the Southern Woolen Mills in Blackburn. In 1902 first grade wool was selling for 35¢ a pound, and the mill at Plateau charged 10¢ a pound to spin wool into yarn. Lucy Ann knitted many socks and gloves from this yarn, and sometimes a sweater or two.

Coulter made more of a business out of goats than of sheep, both the common goat and the Angora; but the latter was his specialty in the goat line. He first began with the common goats, having a small flock by 1902. He was soon selling a few. A Virginia customer wrote him in 1905, "I like them very much, the kid is just as gentle as he can bea, I cant walk for him." A High Point customer had a little different story to tell: "They are making themselves very much at home. Can walk the fence like a cat. Look for them to be on top of the barn next." He did not say whether they had eaten all the old



shoes, rags, and other rubbish they could get their mouths on. In 1916 a Tennessee breeder who wanted to sell some of his goats to Coulter remarked, "I have enough of the Goat business or at least my neighbors has." He offered to sell Coulter twenty-two does, ten kids, and one buck for \$90.00. When Coulter was originally getting together his flock he wrote in 1896 to a resident of Joy (a Burke County village not far from Worry) asking whether he knew where goats could be had. The Joy man replied, "I have found out whear thay is Som kids," and gave him the proper information. When in the same year, thinking of buying some sheep, Coulter wrote a resident of Marion, he was informed that "goats and sheep do very well together—do not bother each other—the goats stay up on top of the fence or on the other side." This information did not deter Coulter from going ahead with the sheep and goat business.

By 1906 Coulter was becoming interested in Angora goats; he was particularly interested in the clippings of mohair to be got from them. He bought a few this year and thereafter for some years he steadily added to his flock. Ranchers in Texas were quoting him bucks from \$25.00 to \$100. By 1908 he was offering for sale does and bucks from \$17.50 to \$22.50. In the cost of their upkeep Angora fanciers argued that Angoras were "far ahead of sheep," that they would eat anything a sheep would and much that a sheep would not touch. They were great browsers and would clean up undergrowth—the only thing better was grubbing. They required little grain in winter. But they had to be fenced well, for they could get through "places that are apparently proof against them." Coulter added: "Dogs do not kill them as they do sheep. Their mohair is in great demand and at good prices. Their meat is better than sheep—more like venison. They are good pets, being snow white and their mohair gives them a fine appearance. They are hardy and fine to run with cattle and keep the pastures in fine order."

Angoras were not "milk goats." Coulter did not handle this breed, and was not able to help an old Tar Heel gentleman who wrote, "Please give me the history of the milk goat, how much milk and butter do they make and how long do they give milk before they go dry?" He added that he was old "and I tought [thought] perhaps a milk goat would suit me. I am 87 years old. Please excuse my bad writing. I don't write much."

Others wanted to know what was best to feed Angora goats, how much mohair was on one, how often they had kids, and so on. Coulter joined the American Angora Goat Breeders' Association of Kansas City, Missouri, and he was listed in the 1910 *Directory of Angora*

*Goat Breeds of the United States*, published by the National Mohair Growers' Association of Silver City, New Mexico.

Coulter sold Angora goats as far away as Puerto Rico, and received such testimonials as this one: "I am delighted with them." John P. Sullivan of City Hall, Charleston, South Carolina, was anxious to buy a few goats but being a very "particular man," he warned Coulter that the kind of goat he shipped would determine their future business relations. Coulter shipped him a goat and this was Sullivan's response: "The goat arrived yesterday (10th) in good shape and I must say that she is a fine one and that I am more than pleased with her." It was a little shy, "but I suppose that is due to the change of scene etc. as it is a far cry from the mountains to the seashore." He wanted to know what would be best to feed the goat and added, "The children are in love with her, and I left them debating this morning as to what would be the most appropriate name for her." One of the names Coulter used in registering Angoras was "Sultan of Burke."

As in all his businesses, Coulter received more orders than he could fill from his own holdings, so he began depending heavily on suppliers. His chief supplier of Angoras was A. A. Woodruff of Cherry Lane, "Dealer and Breeder of Shorthorn Cattle, Angora Goats, Shropshire Sheep, Berkshire Hogs." Coulter's business letters were often chatty as if the person he was writing to was an old friend. In 1912 the Allens having shot up a Virginia court was big news, and since Woodruff lived near the Virginia line, Coulter could not refrain from discussing this tragedy with him. Woodruff said, "As to the Allens I never heard of them until the Hillsville tragedy. I live about forty miles from them. They are said to be men of good property, but of course they are bad men or they would not have committed such a terrific crime. All the Allens have been captured but Sidna, and there is one Edwards boy to be captured."

Coulter did not kill Angora goats for mutton. They were sheared in the spring, and Coulter sold the mohair. In 1908 it was bringing from 27¢ to 29¢ a pound.

Coulter did not go into the cattle business extensively, though he advertised Jersey cattle for sale. In 1915 he was offering a young bull for \$45.00, and he added, "I have other bull calves at different prices. I have registered cows at from \$60 to \$125." A Tar Heel customer wrote that he was well pleased with a Jersey cow he had bought from Coulter, "I think she is one of the finest I ever saw," and another who had bought a bull wrote, "The Bull arrived today in fine shape not a scratch on him, he is a dandy. I am well pleased with him." A South Carolinian who bought a bull wrote that he was well pleased with him but would be better satisfied if he "was

not such a fighter." He had to dehorn him; "he would fight every thing that came in reach of him." The railway conductor warned "me to have plenty of help at the depot to take him off . . . he had negroes running in every direction . . . but he is pretty and I like him." He wanted the bull to be registered under the name of "Tiger." In 1899 Coulter sold ten head of cattle to a purchaser in Ashe County, in the midst of the mountains, the cattle to be driven there on foot.

With his extensive pastures Coulter allowed his neighbors to turn in their cattle for a fee of 50¢ a month for each head. In 1902 the cattle tick eradication movement was in full swing, and Coulter was pushing it vigorously. Tait Butler helped organize Burke County against this pest.

Coulter generally had a horse or two for sale. In 1915, according to his advertisement: "I have a fine standard bred Kentucky saddle horse, mahogany bay, 7 years old, going all gaits and singlefooting very fast under saddle, broke to the wagon, buggy, plow and drill, works single or double, not afraid of train, automobile, motor cycle or anything of the kind, my wife and children drive her anywhere, trots flat and never saddles in the buggy. She is a bargain at \$265."

The poultry business was not entirely neglected by Coulter. He dabbled a little in it from about 1910 and taking over a small business which his son William Bryan had developed before he entered the First World War. Included in the business were turkeys, chickens, and ducks. The turkeys were of the Mammoth Bronze variety; the chickens were White Wyandottes and White Plymouth Rocks; the ducks were the White Indian Runners. The Wyandottes were described as "good layers of large brown eggs and mature rapidly, making broilers and friers in from ten to twelve weeks. Their blocky build, deep breast, neat rose comb, pure white plumage, rich yellow legs and skin, fast maturing and egg producing qualities, all unite to make them a fowl that have no superiors for practical purposes." As for the Plymouth Rocks, "Their large size, fine flavored flesh, deep, well meated breasts and rich yellow legs, put them in a class that is hard to beat as a table and market fowl."

In 1915 a setting of 15 eggs of either breed was offered for \$1.25; Indian Runner Duck eggs were offered at \$1.15 a dozen. In 1911 Coulter asked \$11.00 for one cockerel and ten hens. In 1913 ducks were \$3.00 for a trio. He was offering guineas at \$1.50 a pair, but he was not developing the guinea business. In 1910 he was selling turkey eggs for \$3.00 a dozen. The next year he was selling a trio (a tom and two hens) for \$11.00; but in 1925 it took \$18.00 to buy a trio. Also he sold turkeys for slaughter, by the pound—18¢ in 1913; 45¢ in 1924. His customers were generally pleased with what he sent



them; in 1909 one "received the chickens and was more than pleased with them." A Georgian who generally bought turkeys from Coulter and who believed in diversification on a farm was always pleased. Philosophizing he wrote, "There are several so called good people in the South who yet believe their God and Money reside in a cotton patch—run by a cheap 'Nigger' or a poor white. Hence the hog, cow, Goat and Turkey have not a fair showing."

Not being able to fill all his orders from his poultry pens, Coulter bought from other raisers. One of his principal suppliers was J. M. Ostwalt of Statesville; but Ostwalt finally gave up his duck raising because he believed his ducks ate the fish in his pond—he would rather have fish than ducks. Coulter was never interested enough in the poultry business to join the Burke County Poultry Association, which was organized in 1910 "to disseminate practical poultry information in every way possible to those interested in Poultry Culture."

Every one of Coulter's business enterprises had its hazards, especially from fires and dishonest or impecunious customers; but in his livestock pursuits he suffered less than in any other and found as much satisfaction. Never did he have a barn or shed to burn up, and his livestock pens and small pasture lots were not subject to fires (though his large cow pastures were sometimes burned over). And livestock customers almost always enclosed payments with their orders.

## CHAPTER X

### MIDDLEMAN AND AGENT

WHEN Coulter gave up his merchandising business he had not used up his zeal for trading. He had a natural bent for buying and selling which lasted as long as he lived. As has already appeared, he added much to what he produced and had for sale, by buying from suppliers. So it was only a step for him to enter extensively into the realm of the middleman and agent at the same time when he was carrying on his other business enterprises. In fact many of these activities put him in the class of a commission merchant. Truly almost anything that anyone might want, Coulter had or could get; and it became a habit with people who knew him to go to him for satisfying their needs. On much of his stationery he began "J. E. Coulter, Agent"; for almost anything he needed in his own household or business, he would secure the agency. He had a warehouse in which he kept many things for which there was a constant demand; but much else he ordered direct for the customer. Some items he ordered by the carload and sold direct from the car.

For many years he sold cement and also dynamite with its accessories, fuse and caps. In 1916 he was selling coal at \$4.00 a ton and "screened coal" at \$1.10. When he bought a Standard Sewing Machine for his home ("it is the finest machine in the world"), the Standard Sewing Machine Company offered him the agency, with a commission of \$2.00 on each machine sold. If anyone wanted a sewing machine Coulter was ready to order a Standard. The International Publishing Company of Philadelphia wanted him to act as their "state agent" with a commission of 40%. He was too busy to "fool with this sort of thing," but much to his financial loss he sponsored another person. He had some slight dealings as agent for the Iver Johnson's Arm & Cycle Works of Fitchburg, Massachusetts. An insurance company wanted him to act as their agent—"some nice clean

money, not a cent outlay and no trouble." He could not be bothered with this kind of business. The Roberts Marble Company of Ball Ground, Georgia, wanted him to act as one of their agents for tombstones, but without success—"In the 'Silent Cities' of your territory many, today, are sleeping 'neath the sod with not even a marker to their graves." When the First World War broke out in 1914, a horse dealer of Warrenton, Virginia, acting for the Allies, hoped to enlist Coulter in buying cavalry and artillery horses, from 5 to 9 years old, any color except white or grey. He had no time for this activity, although he was fiercely in favor of the Allies. Attempts were made to interest him actively in nursery agencies, but he steadily resisted ordering anything beyond his own needs with this exception: He had some dealings as an agent receiving a 5% commission, with Stark Bro's Nurseries & Orchard Co. of Louisiana, Missouri. Occasionally he had black walnuts to sell at \$1.25 a bushel, likely secured from his old home place, in Catawba County.

As a middleman or commission merchant, Coulter centered his main activities in heavy groceries; farm machinery; flour, meal, and feedstuffs; grain and seeds; and fertilizers. Among the firms he dealt with in heavy groceries were Frey & Son of Baltimore and A. Blanton Grocery Company of Marion.

He dealt heavily in flour, meal, and feedstuffs, securing most of his supplies from the Glen Alpine Milling Company; the Hickory Milling Company; the Monitor Mills of Claremont; the Statesville Flour Mills; the Asheville Milling Company; the Southern Milling Company and the Liberty Mills, both of Nashville; the Eagle Flouring Mill Company of Sweetwater, Tennessee; Stuart's Draft Milling Company of Virginia; the Crimora Roller Mills of Virginia; and the Mayo Milling Company of Richmond. Oats and corn for feed he bought constantly and in considerable quantities from the Tennessee Grain Company of Nashville. He was buying corn in 1897 at 55¢ and 56¢ a bushel; in 1907, at 78¢ and 79¢. Oats in 1906 was 48¢ a bushel. He bought much cottonseed meal and hulls from the Southern Cotton Oil Company of Charlotte and the Newton Oil & Fertilizer Company. The Edgar-Morgan Company of Memphis sold him a great deal of sweetfeed, "Old Beck" being the trade name. It was a mixture of various feedstuffs held together with blackstrap molasses, secured from Cuba and Puerto Rico. He bought rock salt from N. R. Savage & Son of Richmond. Noah Huitt of Claremont sold him a great deal of hay—pea vines and crab grass mixed.

Grain and seed for planting which Coulter produced, bought, and sold were largely the following: peas, rye, corn, wheat, oats, clover, soy-beans, vetch, barley, rape, lespedeza, sorghum, Soudan grass,



orchard grass, and Japanese buckwheat. Also he sold Irish potatoes for planting. He bought these supplies for the most part from N. R. Savage & Son and T. W. Wood & Sons, both of Richmond; Wm. G. Scarlett & Co. of Baltimore; and H. G. Hastings Company of Atlanta. Coulter was enthusiastic over Abruzzi rye and sold a great deal of it. A law passed in 1937 required a seed dealer's license, costing \$10.00.

During the 1930's there was much interest in the inoculation of seeds. It was recommended for all legume crops, such as beans, peas, clover, vetch, alfalfa, peanuts, and so on. The Nitro-Germ Company of Savannah, Georgia, made and marketed it and guaranteed a larger yield. Coulter sold it and received a 40% discount. There was doubt among people as to its value. Back in 1911 W. F. Massey of the *Progressive Farmer* wrote, "I have never seen any results from these artificial cultures that amounted to anything. In fact there is a great deal of humbuggery about all this matter of inoculation. Nearly all the legumes will inoculate the land for themselves."

Peas was Coulter's specialty in the seed business and he was in it for almost 50 years. The season for planting ended by the middle of July, though early varieties could be sown as late as the first of August. Following the pea season came the wheat and rye planting time. If he was caught with a supply of peas after the planting season, he could save them for the next year, by pouring them in barrels or large bins covering them with sacks or other canvas, and placing in open cans a vermifuge liquid whose fumes percolated downward and destroyed weevils and any other pests.

There were more than 200 names under which peas were sold, some being different names for the same variety. Planters often had their favorites, which, however, might vary with the years. Peas differed in color and shape both of the bodies and eyes, in maturity, in hardness to resist drought, in yield, in vigor to grow on poor soil, in abundance of vine, and in other characteristics which were considered worthwhile. They were all known as cow peas. The Black Pea was large and entirely black except the eye, a standard variety of large growth and early maturity.

The Taylor Pea was perhaps "the largest of all cow peas," a "heavy yielder in vine and peas," and speckled in color. Ram's Horn was an early white pea with a black eye, developed in California, so early that if planted in April it would make two crops, the "best Blackeye Pea known and for table use this Pea will prove of immense value." The Crowder Pea was large and cream colored, so-called because it was crowded into the hull with stumpy ends. The Red Ripper was dark red, "late, excellent in corn, light seed yield, but heavily

in hay, sometimes called Wine Pea, being large and soft, it is used for shelling green in the pod."

The Wonderful or Unknown Pea made "an enormous and remarkable growth of vine" and required a full growing season. It was also known as Boss or Quadroon, being "a pale buff color, large with peculiar hump." The Whipporwill or Speckled or Shinney was brown speckled, a "favorite early upright growing variety, more largely used and sold than any other kind." The Peerless or Running Speckled was a long slim pea. The Iron or Flint was a "small, hard, grayish-yellow, glassy or shiney Pea, known sometimes as Buckshot," largely weevil-proof, "and one of the most valuable peas in the world." The Brabham was a variety developed in South Carolina, a hybrid between the Iron and the Whipporwill, a small speckled pea about the size of the Iron pea, with the earliness of the Whipporwill and the wilt-resistance of the Iron. The New Era was a small bluish pea, early maturing. The Clay Pea was of the same color as the Unknown, but smaller, flatter, and longer, and prolific in both seed and vine. It was a favorite with many people. The Brown Eye Pea was white with a brown eye, a "universal table Pea, good eater, largely used in the South." The Little Lady Peas had a "delicate vine, very prolific bearer, the finest of all the white table Peas, very sugary, the daintiest, smallest and most highly prized of all white Peas for the table." Such were the peas which Coulter had to sell, and such were the descriptions he gave them.

It was difficult to keep peas from becoming slightly mixed with other varieties, and on this point Coulter wrote that "if a man was to offer me \$10.00 a bu. for peas without a single other variety of peas in them I would not ship them for I would know that it was next to impossible to get peas strictly of one variety." Of course there were "mixed peas" in which no one variety predominated, and such peas always bore a lower price.

The prices of peas varied (but not much) with the variety, but very greatly with the times. In 1899 peas were selling for 75¢ a bushel; in 1900 they were \$1.25; in 1907 they were \$2.25; and about the same in 1913 and 1914. With the First World War in progress, peas were selling from \$3.25 and even as high as \$5.00. In 1918 Coulter quoted peas at \$5.25 a bushel and in 1920 he sold 110 bushels at that price, and in another sale the same year he received \$5.00 a bushel for 250 bushels. By the 1930's the price of peas had fallen tremendously. In 1932 Coulter was being offered only 55¢ a bushel; and in 1935 the price was \$1.25 to \$1.50.

Coulter sold thousands of bushels of peas year by year for many years. The busy season was from January to late July. He sold to

customers both large and small. The large seed companies and the seed brokers generally asked for samples before they ordered. The large companies who became old customers were L. R. Stricker (later Stricker Seed Company) of Asheville, N. R. Savage & Son of Richmond, T. W. Wood & Sons of Richmond, Roney & Company of Memphis, and the N. L. Willet Seed Company of Augusta. Others were Hattaway & Company of Spartanburg, the Hickory Seed Company, and J. C. Troy of Durham (whose name Coulter almost invariably spelled Tory without Troy making any complaints or correction). The Willet Company tried to induce Coulter to raise 800 bushels or more on contract at a stated price, but without avail.

Coulter's big customers were seed brokers, who had their own customers, and some of them did not bother to have Coulter ship orders of peas to themselves, but direct to their customers. This practice opened the way to Coulter to learn the names of these customers from whom he might solicit orders direct and thereby gain their business. He was above taking this unethical procedure, and did not disclose his name in making these shipments and thus prevented those customers from taking the initiative and ordering direct from Coulter. In explaining his practice to one of his own broker customers Coulter advised him to notify the person that the shipment was going forward "as I am not writing them. They are your customers and I will not disclose my identity to them, as I feel it would not be right. I am selling you, and you to them, and I have no right under strict business rules to try to take or in any way win your trade."

Many small farmers from Virginia to South Carolina, and elsewhere, wrote Coulter for peas and pea prices. A Virginian whom he did not know personally overdid a bit the amenities in writing him for prices and descriptions of varieties of peas. He ended his letter: "Thanking you in advance for a prompt reply to this letter and with kind assurances of my highest personal regards, I have the honor, Mr. Coulter, to subscribe myself with sincere respect and esteem Your most grateful and obedient servant." As in all his business correspondence Coulter received highly illiterate letters, such as this one: "Mr colter sur iwode be glad if vo wod owrite the pris one [on] the Sead obly S. L. Deel to iles [Ellis] colter." Coulter's pea customers were generally well satisfied, as this one: The peas "arrived in due time, and will say I never saw better looking peas in my life." Complaints generally related to shortages by sacks being torn in rough handling by the railways. Such shortages were generally made good by the railway company involved. Nearly all peas went forward in new sacks—sometimes repaired sacks were used. Coulter bought most of



his sacks from the Memphis Bag Company and Mente & Company of New Orleans. The price per sack was  $7\frac{1}{2}\phi$  to  $15\phi$ .

Sometimes there were complaints regarding the quality of the peas, that they were trashy or weevil-eaten or from the crop of a previous year. Sometimes these complaints were true, for Coulter ran the hazard of getting inferior peas when he bought them and had them shipped from the place of origin, without seeing them. It should be quite evident that with his large pea trade he could raise on his own land only a small part of what he sold; but in most instances he bought the peas from farmers in the vicinity, who brought them in where Coulter recleaned them and sacked them. In 1920 the pea trade was probably at its height, and scarcely a day passed during the season without wagons from the country bringing in peas. Also country merchants collected quantities which they sold him, the principal ones being B. B. DePriest of Lattimore and W. W. Aiken of Icard.

Farm machinery and appurtenances came well within Coulter's trading sphere. In this realm he manufactured nothing but sold as an agent the products of a great many companies. Among the first, if not the first, agency he accepted was one for wagons. Since every countryman of any standing needed a wagon, Coulter saw a lucrative business opportunity here. Long before he came to Connelly Springs he was selling wagons made by the Piedmont Wagon Co. of Hickory, "Manufacturers of Farm and Road Wagons and other Vehicles." About the same time he began the agency for Geo. E. Nissen & Co., "Wagon Manufacturers" of Salem, who had been in business since 1834. Coulter swapped lumber, shingles, and laths for Nissen wagons. In 1896 he secured seven wagons in four months by this method of doing business.

Another wagon-maker of Salem whose agency Coulter long held was J. C. Spach & Bro. "(Cheap John), Manufacturers of the Celebrated W. E. Spach Hand-Made Wagon." According to their announcement the founder had "been in the business for over forty years, and being a master mechanic, better understands the characteristics of a good wagon than any man living. We use the best of material, and all work is finished at the bench, by hand, by the best mechanics." As with the Nissen company, Coulter did most of his business with Spach by swapping lumber and shingles (mostly shingles) for wagons. The Spach brothers, who did not need the shingles for their own use, sold them or swapped them to whomever would take them. J. C. ("Cheap John") Spach, who could make a much better wagon than he could an English sentence, wrote Coulter in 1893, "i have not the cind of Wagon on hand you Want Butt ame to starte

up the 8 & then i cand make it & have it done By the 20 if that Will do drop me a Postall at once i am oute of the shingell Bissness & cant use aney i am sorey i could not Butt times ar too tite to do mutch Bissness i am a demacrat Butt dont think mutch of their times." With the Panic of 1893 running headlong into every kind of business, Spach was reducing the price of his wagons. The "2-Horse Wagon with Crooked Bed" was reduced from \$62.00 to \$60.00 and "Wagons with Straight Plank Beds" were now selling from \$48.00 to \$58.00, which formerly sold from \$50.00 to \$65.00. Coulter received a 5% commission on all wagons he sold. The next year Spach wrote that he would "Bea glad to Hear from you if you cand sell some more Wagons for cash i will pay you a doubell comishen from now on till fall." A little later he wanted to swap wagons for a car load of shingles: "Want them as goodas Wea got Before Wea Pay cash for Balanc dew you on them as sone as Wea Can count them & Will count them When Wea un Lode them." The Spach, Nissen, and Piedmont wagons had a high reputation in the Coulter community. Coulter dabbled slightly with other makes of wagons: the products of the Champion Wagon Company of Oswego, New York; the White Hickory Wagon Manufacturing Company of Atlanta and East Point, Georgia; and of the Harrison Wagon Company of Cary.

Every farmer needed a grain drill, unless he tended little land and broadcast his grain by hand. Coulter had contracts for many years with two companies which made drills: the Champion Drill Company of Avon, New York, and the Ontario Drill Company of East Rochester, New York (with a branch office in Baltimore). With the former company Coulter's profits were whatever he sold a drill for above the price quoted to him. If he paid cash he received a 2½% deduction. Most farmers gave notes, many of which Coulter had great difficulty in collecting—and some not at all. The Ontario Drill Company gave more liberal terms, from 20% to 38% with a 5% reduction for cash. These terms varied with the years. This company for a time allowed Coulter to accept notes representing debts which the company stood to collect. But notes were to be accepted only from "parties of responsibility worth at least \$600.00 over and above all their debts and legal exemptions, as well as of good reputation for the payment of their debts."

By 1920 farm tractors were making their appearance, and Coulter soon had the agency for the products of the Hart-Parr Company of Charles City, Iowa, "Founders of the Traction Industry." Contracts varied with the years. At first Coulter received a commission of 15% on one tractor and up to 25% on the sale of 29 or more, with an additional 10% on those sold in certain specified months. These

tractors did not give complete satisfaction, and Coulter had some little trouble in getting adjustments from the company. In 1922 he wrote, "I have had some good prospects, but if I have to stand individually these losses, or try to beat customers out of what they are in justice entitled to, then I am done with the business once and for all."

Many farmers needed a little "new ground" now and then, first for a turnip patch and then to be added to their main farming operations. To plow new ground full of stumps and roots was in common parlance "enough to make a preacher cuss." So those who could afford a stump puller or grubbing machine bought one. Coulter held the agency for the products of the Union Grubber Company of Sigourney, Iowa. The price of their stump pullers was \$85.00, with a commission of \$25.00 to Coulter for every machine which he sold. The company wanted him to take the agency for all of southeastern United States, south of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi; but he was content with only Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba counties. He had no time from his other enterprises to do more than accept orders from anyone who wanted to buy one. He had already sold himself one, and in 1900 the company wrote him that they were glad to know that his machine was giving satisfaction: "We were almost afraid to hear from your place, it had been so long since we had heard any thing from you. We feared your sickness had proved to be more serious than it seemed at the time you last wrote us. We are very glad indeed to know that you are right side up and that you are having a good lumber trade, for we know that a good lumber trade at present prices means that you are making money. And we certainly can not blame you for allowing the grubber business to rest, although we should be very glad if you gave it a little time occasionally, at least."

For general farm machinery such as plows, mowers, rakes, and reapers, Coulter held the agency from the D. M. Osborne Company of Philadelphia. Also he held the agency for various farm implements made by B. F. Avery & Sons of Louisville, Kentucky, "Manufacturers of Plows & Cultivating Implements"; the Rock Island Plow Company of Rock Island, Illinois, "Manufacturers of Agricultural Implements"; and the Chattanooga Plow Company, "Manufacturers of Chilled Plows, Plow Repairs, Cane Mills, Evaporators, and Furnaces." The Cole Manufacturing Company of Charlotte specialized in corn planters. Coulter probably made little out of his agency for pumps made by the Challenge Pump Works of Corona, New York, "Manufacturers of Challenge Pumps and Water Purifiers for Wells and Cisterns." For a long time he held the agency and bought for his own



use the products of the Pomona Terra-Cotta Company of Ponomo, "Manufacturers of Vitrified Salt Glazed Shale Sewer Pipe, Vitrified Wall Coping, R. R. Culvert Pipe, Terra-Cotta Well Tubing, Flue Linings, Drain Tiles, Etc." He received a 5% commission.

Machinery for threshing grain was in the same class with a grist mill—it was too expensive for any one farmer to own, and like a grist mill, toll was taken in payment for service rendered. Coulter held two agencies for such machinery: the J. I. Case Threshing Machine Company and the Geiser Manufacturing Company of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania. From the former company Coulter received a 10% commission on threshing machines and engines and 25% on repairs; with the latter the commission was 25% to 30%, depending on the items sold. Coulter probably sold few of such large pieces of machinery, but apparently he sold himself and a partner an outfit for threshing grain. This partner was a man with whom he had long been having dealings in timber, wagoning, and sales of various items. John Zimmerman was his name, and with Zimmerman he formed a partnership sometime in the 1930's. Later Marler R. Wilson was added and the firm name became Coulter, Zimmerman & Wilson Threshing Company, with Coulter as secretary and treasurer. For a few seasons they threshed about 10,000 bushels each; but they soon accumulated more troubles than money, including paying Oscar Abee \$19.00 in settlement for a mashed finger to prevent extended trouble under the Liability and Compensation law. After various troubles in settling up with Wilson, Coulter tried to come to some terms with Zimmerman, offering to buy him out or sell out to him. Finally in 1941, when Coulter was 80 years old he was able to come to a settlement with Zimmerman.

Coulter's first business love, longest continued, and last to be given up was selling fertilizer. For at least a half century he had the aroma of fertilizer in his nostrils—it was like printer's ink in the nostrils and on the hands of the printer. It wouldn't leave—like the blood on Lady Macbeth's hands. The busiest fertilizer seasons were from January to June and from September to December. He bought it by the carload and generally sold it direct from the car door, but, of course, some farmers would arrive too late to get their fertilizer and it became desirable for Coulter to unload a few cars into a warehouse so as to supply customers at any time. At first he tried to get one of the big fertilizer companies with whom he had large dealings to finance such a building, but it replied that such an arrangement was against its policy. Later Coulter rented a warehouse. When fertilizer remained very long in its sacks the chemicals rotted the sack and made it difficult to handle. One company insisted that it had obviated this

difficulty by using as a filler, ground tobacco stems which absorbed the chemical moisture, which rotted the sack.

When Coulter first began selling fertilizer it was necessary to haul it by wagons ten miles from the railroad to his place of business in the "Nation." Some few years before he quit selling fertilizer, much of it was being hauled again, but not by means of "old dobbins" pulling a wagon. Now it came by motor truck, and a warehouse in which to store it became a necessity. What changes Coulter had seen in his 86 years not only in the fertilizer business but in all other kinds of businesses!

There were many companies, large and small, which manufactured and sold fertilizers; and as a result there was keen competition among them. Of course, all argued for the use of commercial fertilizers and discouraged farmers from building up fertility in other ways. One of the companies started the slogan, "There are no Plows in the pawn shop," adding that the farmer was now (this was in 1913) "the man that will hold the pucker string to the American pocket book." All of them tried to keep on good terms with their agents. One of them wrote Coulter in 1908, "We are very grateful indeed to you for the nice tonnage you gave us, and we hope another season you will remember us." This same company allowed Coulter to reduce his prices as much as \$2.00 and \$3.00 a ton to meet local competition from agents representing other companies. Another company gave Coulter a birthday dinner and a John B. Stetson hat when he was 66 years old.

The favorite fertilizers were 16% Acid Phosphate, Bone & Potash, Fish Guano, 8-3-3 and 8-2-2. Of course there were dozens of mixtures and a little of all might be sold now and then. During the First World War the potash supply from Germany was cut off, and now Nitrate of Soda was advocated as a substitute which would bring out the inherent potash in the soil. As was stated, "Practically all soils suitable for the growth of crops contain Potash in both available and unavailable forms." Soon a great demand for Nitrate of Soda arose and continued on into making it a favorite fertilizer. Many farmers held that Acid Phosphate was best for wheat. A dealer thought that Coulter's customers would be well pleased with it, adding "There is nothing better for wheat. Nearly everybody is quitting guano for wheat and are using Acid Phos."

Fertilizer prices varied with the times and among the companies making it, though in the latter case there could be no great difference. Cash prices were, of course, cheaper than time prices, both from the company to the agent and from the agent to the farmer. Coulter tried to take advantage of cash prices and advised his cus-

tomers to do the same. In 1924 in advocating cash prices to a customer he said, "This is the only way that a farmer can afford to buy it as they [the companies] charge too much difference for time. A farmer can borrow his money, pay interest, and have a good margin to his credit over paying time prices." In 1917 these were some cash prices per ton quoted to Coulter on fertilizers delivered at his place: 16% Acid Phosphate, \$19.00 (\$21.00 time); Bone & Potash, \$38.95 and \$43.05; 8-3-3 Guano, \$49.40 and \$54.60. In 1924 Nitrate of Soda was offered f.o.b. (freight on board cars) Wilmington at \$52.00 a ton. Coulter bought most of his Nitrate of Soda from W. R. Grace & Company of New York, who imported it from Chile and landed much of it at Charleston and Wilmington. In 1930 cash prices of some fertilizers delivered per ton in carload lots were: 8-2-2 Guano, \$21.39; 8-3-3 Guano, \$24.24; Bone & Potash, \$20.06; Muriate of Potash, \$45.95; Sulphate of Ammonia, \$49.22; and Nitrate of Soda, \$51.01. Carload lots were always cheaper than broken shipments.

Some soils needed lime, and Coulter was prepared to supply it. The American Limestone Company of Knoxville gave seventeen reasons why farmers should add lime to their soil. This lime was ground rock lime (not builder's lime, which cost twice as much). In 1914 Coulter was paying \$3.30 a ton delivered at his place; but there were various prices depending on the times and whether the lime came in bulk in cars or was sacked. In 1916 the Blue Ridge Lime Company of Asheville (with works at Fletcher) offered lime f.o.b. Fletcher at \$1.50 a ton in bulk or \$2.50 in bags. At the same time the Clinchfield Lime Company of Asheville (with works at Linville Falls) at \$1.15 a ton in bulk f.o.b., Linville Falls. In 1920 Coulter bought 33 tons in Knoxville for \$90.75 and the freight on it was \$44.94. In 1931 he bought lime in sacks delivered in Connelly Springs for \$5.13 a ton. He received a commission of \$1.00 a ton and a discount of 15¢ a ton for cash. His commissions went down as low as 10¢ a ton at certain times with certain companies. In addition to the companies already mentioned, he dealt with the Limestone Springs Lime Works of Gaffney, South Carolina (in barrels), the Campbell Limestone Company of the same place, the G. C. Buquo Lime Company of Columbia, and the B. & C. Lime & Stone Company of Asheville.

Throughout his half century of fertilizer business Coulter dealt with dozens of companies, some large, some small, and often he would be dealing with three or four companies at the same time—there were no exclusive contracts. When Coulter was a boy working on his father's farm he became acquainted with the products of Baugh & Sons of Norfolk and Baltimore. It was logical that he should begin his first fertilizer dealings with this company, selling such brands



as these: Baugh's Raw Bone Super-Phosphate of Lime, Baugh's Double Eagle Phosphate, and Baugh's Wheat Fertilizer. Very soon he was adding to his list the Old Dominion Guano Company of Norfolk and dealing very heavily in the late 1890's with the Durham Fertilizer Company, which was a branch of the Virginia-Carolina Chemical Company. This company became one of the biggest, annexing the Imperial Fertilizer Company of Charleston, with whom Coulter had been dealing extensively. In fact, during Coulter's last business days he was dealing most heavily with the Virginia-Carolina Chemical Company—The "VC, More than 35 Million Tons of Experience Back of Every Bag."

Before the turn of the century he was dealing also with the Navassa Guano Company of Wilmington and with a local company at Hickory, Royster and Whitener. In this same period he was buying much Acidulated Bone from the Etiwan Phosphate Works of Charleston. Being opposed to big fertilizer combinations, he made special inquiry of the Etiwan company whether they had been taken over by the Virginia-Carolina Chemical Company. Other companies whose products he handled were: the Union Guano Company of Winston-Salem; the Caraleigh Phosphate and Fertilizer Works of Raleigh; Swift Fertilizer Works of Atlanta; the Catawba Fertilizer Company of Lancaster, South Carolina; the International Agricultural Corporation of New York, with branch offices in Charlotte and Atlanta; the Seacoast Fertilizer Company (a branch of the International); the Bryant Fertilizer Company of Alexandria, Virginia; the Kershaw Oil Mill of Kershaw, South Carolina; the F. S. Royster Guano Company of Norfolk; the McCabe Fertilizer Company of Charlotte; the Read Phosphate Company of Charleston; Tennessee Chemical Company of Greensboro (a branch of Armour); the Wulbern Fertilizer Corporation of Charleston; the East Coast Fertilizer Company of Wilmington; the Planters Fertilizer and Phosphate Company of Charleston; the Smith-Douglass Company of Norfolk; the American Agricultural Chemical Company of Greensboro; and the Merchants Fertilizer & Phosphate Company (reorganized in 1931 as the Merchants Fertilizer Company).

Some of these companies sent their representatives around to see their big customers, but the smaller companies depended entirely on solicitation through the mails. The Merchants Company for many years had a very successful representative in the person of T. R. Wickliffe of Bowman, Georgia. He became a personal friend of Coulter, who gave him a great part of his business from 1926 on down until almost the end. In 1934 when Coulter was having a small

sickness in a Statesville hospital, Wickliffe made a special trip to see him.

These checks in payment of business which Coulter did during the spring season of 1930 give an indication of the amount done with this one company: \$517, \$538, \$488, \$591, \$561, \$465, \$562, \$570, \$414, \$723, \$550, \$673, \$516, \$348, \$444, \$494, \$631, \$851, \$402, \$67.00, \$31.00, \$413, \$99.00, \$203, \$99.00, \$561, \$309, \$227, and \$90.00.

Coulter's sales were always brisk but in some years when he pushed sales, he sold from \$5,000 to \$10,000 a year. His commissions ranged from 5% to 10% on a fixed price which the company set for his customers to pay; but in some cases he was given his private price and allowed to sell for whatever he could get above that price, the difference constituting his profit. The companies charged either cash or time prices, and sometimes when Coulter got behind on his payments he borrowed from his bank or gave mortgages on his property. In 1908 to secure a debt of \$2,246.26 to the Union Guano Company he gave a mortgage on five acres in Rutherford College, a storehouse and lot in Connelly Springs, 300,000 laths, and 640,000 shingles. Sometimes he would send a draft on a debtor who owed him for lumber, which sometimes the fertilizer company would accept and sometimes not.

Coulter sold most of his fertilizer on time, taking notes, crop liens, and chattel mortgages. Always hating to turn away a farmer who wanted fertilizer he accumulated a great mass of notes, many of which were never paid. In 1897 he held 106 notes for fertilizer got from the Etiwan Company, ranging from \$1.50 to \$54.07. In 1924 he held fertilizer notes for at least \$10,000. Forms for fertilizer notes were provided by the big companies. When signed Coulter would send them to the companies for recording, but the companies would not accept them as collateral for debts Coulter owed them. They expected him to collect them. The Union Guano Company warned him to be careful in giving credit and to secure the debt by a mortgage: "In our opinion if credit is to be given at all it should only be extended to such parties as you know are absolutely good and from whom there is no doubt of your getting your money; even in such cases it is well that the sales should be secured by a mortgage. If a man is good and fully intends to pay his debts he should have no objections whatever to giving a mortgage."

Crop liens were made in pursuance of a North Carolina law of March 1, 1867, "to secure advances for Agricultural purposes," and they became a lien "on all the Crop of Corn, Cotton, Tobacco, Oats, Wheat, Fodder, and all other products to be raised and made" on certain specified lands described in the lien. The Virginia-Carolina

Chemical Company had a form which waived "homestead and all other exemptions" and made no guarantee on its fertilizers "as to the result from its use." Sometimes these liens were extended to any possession, personal or otherwise, which the customer had. In 1896 Coulter had a lien not only on the crop of a customer, but also on a cow named "Cherry" with white stripes across her back and a brindle mulley milch cow with a white face and named "Guinny"—all to guarantee payment of \$6.60 for four sacks of fertilizer. Also he had a lien on a watch and a half interest in a camera "and other outfit for picture making." These crop liens were in vogue in the 1890's. After 1900 Coulter sold much fertilizer on credit, depending entirely on faith and on the honesty of the purchaser.

In 1899 he sent a form letter to customers who had signed notes for fertilizer which he had bought from the Durham Fertilizer Company. After reminding the debtor that his note had matured and had not been paid, he said: "We would like very much to give you further indulgence, but cannot do so, and unless you come forward and pay promptly we will enforce collection by law. This will entail a cost of from \$5 to \$10 on you, besides the worry and vexation. You will dislike to have your property conveyed in the mortgage sold at a sacrifice at public auction, and I therefore sincerely hope this will not be necessary, and I do trust you will get up the money by [blank to be filled in] and unless you do or give a satisfactory reason you may expect the sheriff to be after the property mortgaged any day after [blank to be filled in]. To assist you I will take corn, wheat, oats, peas, or other staple produce at the highest market price for cash in payment of your indebtedness, as I assure you I dislike very much to give you any trouble, but as I am personally liable for this debt and unless I collect it will have to pay it myself and as I also have a kind feeling for myself and family, you must not be surprised or feel sore toward me if I force collection. Besides as you got the benefit of the goods you and not I should pay for them. I hope to see you in a few days. Your friend, J. E. Coulter, Agt."

Later with notes out-of-date or never required in the first instance, Coulter depended largely on persuasion, sentiment or the conscience of the debtor to come in and pay without being reminded of the debt. This is a letter he wrote in 1932 reminding a customer of a long-standing small fertilizer debt: "On September 1st I sent you a statement of the Acct. but you neglected to pay me or say when you would pay. Dont you feel like I have waited long enough? Would you want me to wait longer were I oweing you? Wont you please pay this small ballance that you have owed a long time, and that I need so badly? I am thanking you in advance for your prompt at-



tention to this little matter. Please do let me have it. With best wishes to you and yours. . . ." Another debtor responded to a request for payment: "God knows when I will be able to send you balance? everybody says that taxes take all what they can make."

In addition to all his other agencies Coulter dealt slightly in certain forest products other than lumber, laths, and shingles. In clearing woods for agricultural fields and in his mountain lands, he had a vast supply of wood, which could be cut and sold by the cord. The standard cord was wood cut four feet long and stacked in piles four feet high and eight feet long; it must amount to 128 cubic feet in whatever lengths desired. He sold much of his own production and what he bought for sale, to mills and institutions in Morganton. In 1898 he sold 100 cords of oak wood to the North Carolina School for the Deaf and Dumb at \$1.50 a cord; pine was priced at \$1.40. Also he sold wood to the Morganton Electric Light & Power Company and to the Alpine Cotton Mills. In 1920 he was receiving \$1.50 a cord for old field pine and \$1.75 for oak and forest pine.

An activity that was to come, flourish and go—and God speed to its going—was the cutting down and skinning oak and chestnut trees for tan bark. In 1891 the Burke Tanning Company was started in Morganton, which planned to tan 1,000 hides a day if tan bark could be secured. Soon the majestic chestnuts and mountain oaks were falling before the woodsman's axe, for the bark to be stripped off, leaving the rest to bleach in the sun and rot. The Burke Tanning Company bought during the spring season of 1895 (when the sap was up and the bark could be stripped) 5,000 tons of bark at \$4.00 a ton. It was estimated that during the preceding years the company had spent \$100,000 for bark in Burke alone. Coulter bought much tan bark and shipped most of it to Morganton, though a little to Hickory. In 1909 the bark was selling for \$9.00 a ton and in 1920 it was bringing \$20.00, as the tan bark trees were being cut out. Soon the remaining forests of these trees were left undisturbed by tan bark cutters, because a tannic acid had been chemically developed which was cheaper than that secured from tan bark.

The chemists had at last come to the aid of those lovers of trees who wanted to save them from wasteful slaughter. As early as 1901 voices were being raised against destroying the "noble forests for a little tan bark." A western North Carolina newspaper observed, "On the mountain sides and in the coves one sees hundreds of peeled trees left to ruin and rot, just for the sake of a little bark." But looking at the other side of the coin, there were many mountaineers hard put to make a living from scratching a steep, rocky, begrudging soil with a bull tongue plow. It was either peeling tan bark or engaging in

distilling illegally "mountain dew." Alex Hilderbrand, who lived in the midst of the South Mountains often passed by the Coulter residence on his way to town with a squeaky wagon loaded with tan bark.

But this slaughter was not entirely wasteful. Some trees cut for their bark were slim and trim enough to serve as telephone and telegraph poles. There was a market for poles and Coulter handled some. They must be chestnut and six inches in diameter at the top. Poles from 25 to 45 feet in length sold from 90¢ to \$1.40 each. Much of this timber which could not serve for poles could readily be cut into railroad cross-ties. The Southern Railway was always in the market for them. The hardwoods were more desirable, but for a time the railroad company would buy softwoods of long-leaf yellow pines or black or red cypress—but such timber did not grow in Burke County. The hardwoods that were desired were white oak, post oak, chestnut (mountain) oak, walnut, and locust. They must be cut from live timber between August 15th and February 15th, and be 8½ feet long. In 1903 Coulter sold the Southern Railway 500 hardwood ties at 30¢ for first class and 15¢ for seconds. He generally made 5¢ on each tie he bought and sold. In 1908 he sold to the Valley Tie and Lumber Company of Johnson City, Tennessee, 2,764 ties at 40¢ each for first grade oak and 25¢ for seconds.

For a short time during the last years of the 1890's there were two businesses of short duration but exciting as long as they lasted—both called forth by the electrical industry. They were the production of monazite and mica. Monazite was a blackish substance found in the creek sands only in the Carolinas and Brazil. For a time the sands of Cold Water Creek and others around about were being vigorously worked for this black gold; but the market soon played out. There were some mica mines in the hills and a few on Coulter's mountain lands. In 1897 the Morganton newspaper reported much excitement around Connelly Springs and much digging for these opaque sheets, often called isinglass. Coulter dabbled slightly in these "gold rushes."

## CHAPTER XI

### THE RISE AND DECLINE OF CONNELLY SPRINGS

**D**URING Coulter's lifetime Connelly Springs grew, developed ambitions to become a little city, and declined into nothing more than a small residential community. During his 55-year residence there the cycle had been run.

From the beginning it enjoyed certain advantages that gave it more importance than many other villages along the railway line. It had a water tank which made it necessary for almost every train to stop to take on water. This was an especial convenience for boarding passenger trains, some of which did not stop at other small railroad stations. Also local freight trains broke their run here to spend the night, which meant that the railway crews might build homes in Connelly Springs for their families. To add to the railway importance of the village, arrangements were made through what was called a "Y" for locomotives to be turned around. And it should not be forgotten that from the very beginning Connelly Springs had been designated as a stopping point for the mid-day meal for passenger trains passing about time for that repast. In the heyday of railway passenger traffic there were seven passenger trains passing through, and all of them stopping—if not by schedule at least for water. Numbers 15, 21, 11, and 35 were westbound; the eastbound trains were numbers 22, 12, 16, and 36. And during this flourishing period, in addition to being a water station, Connelly Springs became a coaling station with a coal chute employing a half dozen workmen or more and also a storage yard for coal.

At the depot there was a freight agent, express agent, ticket agent, and telegraph agent, generally all in one person; but as the telegraph office was kept open all night an additional person or two were needed. Ben Abernethy was the agent of longest tenure. This railroad when first built was known as the Western North Carolina Rail Road and



it was owned almost completely by the State of North Carolina. In 1871 the state leased it to the Richmond and Danville Railroad. This railroad was later reorganized as the Southern Railway, which in 1895 leased the road for 99 years. The road through the "Connelly Gap," to the eastward, was so steep that now and then long freight trains would stall and be forced to back up through the village to "get a running start" to make the grade. Infrequently a train would break apart with half the train going each way, but this was before air brakes had been installed and when the link and pin couplings were in use. In 1902 (a few years after the Southern had leased the road) this company employed the construction company of J. W. Oliver to cut down this grade and build up some of the low fills. Their dinkey engines and cars loaded with dirt made an unusual sight as they wobbled through the town to deposit their loads on the fill to the westward.

The village was not large enough to afford much excitement, but no place could be so small as not to be the scene of something unusual happening. Occasionally the villagers might hear a horn blowing far off and they had come to know that that meant the approach of the Italian with his bear. In the center of town he would stop and put his bear to doing tricks, standing on his hind-legs, turning somersaults, and if enough small coins were thrown into the ring the Italian would wrestle with the bear. The Italian and the bear would then trudge on down the railroad track (or maybe the "big road"), and if it were near nightfall he and his bear might spend the night in an old borrow-pit (often called "barn-pit"), where the original railroad construction gangs had borrowed dirt to make fills. Seldom if ever did an Italian with his monkey and organ grinder come.

On December 25, 1890 (or probably a day or two before) about midnight a noise was heard in the village much louder than an Italian blowing his horn. A crime was being committed characteristic of the biggest cities—robbers were blowing open with dynamite two safes in J. M. Sides' store (one belonging to him and the other to H. W. Connelly), from which they took between \$500 and \$600. The depot agent heard the noise, but he thought someone somewhere was merely celebrating Christmas. Twenty-four years later W. J. Alexander saw a light in his store long after closing-time. He went to investigate. He ran into the robber and was wounded but not badly.

Somewhat in keeping with this crime was an affray which might have developed into a race riot between whites and Negroes had there been enough people of both races around to make one. As it was, only three of each race were involved, and the time was in September of 1905. It all began when Linn Misher (Michaux) and Sam Jenkins,

two "gentlemen of color" from the little Negro settlement a mile or more north of town, "all tanked up on mean likker," made their appearance determined to paint the town red (or perhaps make it black). When W. P. Haliburton sought to quiet them down, Linn whipped out that favorite weapon of the colored fraternity, more used for social purposes than for shaving—a razor—and badly cut Haliburton. Horace Goode, who was afraid of neither God, man, nor the devil, came to the rescue and was greeted by a pistol ball glazing his coat. At this juncture Bob Twitty, a Hotel Negro helper, ran to get his pistol, saying that he was going to shoot a white man. At this moment Weber Glass, Goode's brother-in-law, seeing that the Negroes were armed with deadly weapons and the whites unarmed, hurried away for a shotgun and returning shot Sam in the legs. Sam also received a pistol ball in one of his legs, shot by one of his allies in the thick of the melee. The Negroes now sensing defeat quickly retreated in three different directions. Sheriff Manley McDowell arrested and jailed Twitty; Linn ran so far away that he was never seen or heard of again; and Sam was so badly wounded that he could not be moved for a time. Otherwise Connelly Springs was a fairly peaceable town.

But it was not healthful for a village to be so peaceful as not to be punctuated now and then by some sort of excitement or entertainment. Occasionally about "huckleberry and blackberry picking time," to scare away poachers (especially Negroes) from private preserves, rumors would be started of fearsome varmints on the loose, a wild man, a dog eater, maybe a panther (commonly called by the illiterate "painter"). In 1898 a rumor of sufficient strength to obtain lodgment in the county newspaper was going the rounds that a varmint of some sort had killed and eaten half of a dog and that another dog after a fierce fight had made its escape by crawling far up under a house. Also a child had been missing for a few days, and it was feared that it had been carried off.

More in the line of entertainment than excitement was a North Pole exhibit which was going the rounds about the time (1909), Robert E. Peary (or Frederick A. Cook?) discovered the top of the earth. W. H. Davis of Advance, North Carolina, was the proprietor of this exhibit which was "A Wonderful Panoramic Entertainment consisting of over fifty Startling Panoramic Stereoptican Views, each enlarged to cover over 100 square feet of canvas," showing mountains of ice, Esquimau villages, and "many other cold Arctic scenes." Davis offered to the village 20% of the proceeds, but there is no record as to whether or not he appeared.

The fact that a railroad came through the village greatly relieved

the monotony, for there was scarcely an hour during which a train (freight or passenger) did not come to a stop with its squeaking brakes scattering sparks. If it was a passenger train almost the whole town was out to see if any acquaintances were passing through. The late afternoon passenger trains attracted the "small fry," who would appear at the station for a little social fraternization, in the guise of coming to town to get the mail.

Now and then persons of high standing came through on the train—even presidents of the United States—and then, indeed, there was excitement! In 1897 President William McKinley passed on his way to Washington from Tennessee, and in 1908 President-elect William Howard Taft was on an early morning train, but he failed to appear to greet a large crowd that had collected—maybe the votes he lost here caused his defeat in 1912! For downright excitement, nothing could equal a "soldier train." In 1898, the year of the Spanish-American War, several such trains passed along. The soldiers in their uniforms were a sight for everybody to see as they piled off the train the moment it stopped. They fanned out all over town bargaining with merchants until the train was ready to start, and then they rushed out with their "purchases," without taking time to pay for them. The "small fry" with their baskets of peaches and other fruits soon learned never to bring anything to sell to a soldier train. Another excitement of a different sort was the wreck of No. 11 (a passenger train) in May, 1912. The mail car "split the switch" and piled the train up against a freight train on the side track, killing the engineer on the freight train and a Negro girl on the passenger train.

There were no churches in the village until 1887, when a Methodist church congregation was organized and a building erected. Previously the Methodists had attended Jones Grove Church, situated in the village of Rutherford College, a mile and a half to the northward. The year before, a Sunday School had been organized in an abandoned store building, attended by all the religious denominations in town. The Connelly Springs Methodist congregation was organized and the building erected principally through the efforts of H. W. and W. W. Connelly, J. M. Sides, D. P. Goode, and Hugh Southerland, Sr. Sylvanus Deal, although a Baptist, gave \$10.00 to the building fund. The church structure was built on land donated by Mrs. Emma Connelly Perry (wife of Alex Perry, sister of H. W. and W. W. Connelly, and sister-in-law of J. M. Sides). Mrs. Hugh Southerland was the first organist and her husband was for many years the Superintendent of the Sunday School. The parsonage was not built until 1895, and as might well be inferred Coulter provided the lumber. The Baptists built their first church in 1901, with Coulter



affording the lumber. In 1902 Mrs. L. M. Hull, the wife of a merchant recently moved to town, collected money to erect a Presbyterian church, but being unable to raise a sufficient amount she distributed it among worthy causes thereabouts. Coulter was a Lutheran, but as there were few of that faith around, there was no chance of organizing a congregation or erecting a church building. He attended the Methodist and Baptist churches occasionally when not going to some Lutheran church farther away.

The schoolhouse in the public school district which included Connelly Springs was some distance from the village; but now and then a private "subscription" school would be organized in town. Not until 1909 was a schoolhouse erected in Connelly Springs, when a special local-tax district was set up. In 1922 this district was consolidated with the Rutherford College district and a new building erected in the outskirts of the latter village. Coulter, who was now on the Burke County Board of Education, though opposing this move, was unjustly criticized for allowing it to happen.

The legislature in 1901 provided a fund to be used in setting up "Rural District Libraries," to be supplemented by the local district. Coulter led the subscription list for additional support, which was circulated among the townsmen. T. F. Toon, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, in Raleigh, sent out a "List of Books Recommended for Rural Libraries," consisting of about 90 titles, which could be had for \$29.97. He also included a supplementary list of about 50 titles. These books varied in prices from 12¢ for *Songs and Stories* to \$1.10 for W. J. Peele's *Lives of Distinguished North Carolinians* and \$1.20 for Thompson's *Wild Animals I Have Known*. The last two books were the only ones costing as much as \$1.00. Most of them were less than 50¢. The selections were made and a bookplate was pasted in every volume containing the following: "Rules—A book may be kept out for two weeks with the privilege of one renewal. A penalty of one cent a day shall be charged for each book kept out longer than the prescribed time and privilege of the Library shall be withdrawn by the Librarian from any person who refuses or neglects to pay arreages, or who abuses or suffers a book to be abused."

A bookcase was made for them and one family and then another agreed to keep the books to be loaned as people came to borrow. The Coulter children were anxious to have the books kept in their home, but their mother felt that there would be a constant worry in managing these books—in addition to managing eight children. But finally she relented, and the books found their final resting place with the Coulters. One of the children read almost all of them. Favorite books were Guerber's *Story of the Romans*, Abbott's *Alfred*

*the Great*, Williamson's *Life of Jackson* [Stonewall], *Enoch Arden*, *Hiawatha*, *Stories of Old Greece*, *Swiss Family Robinson*, Henty's *With Lee in Virginia*, *Young Marooners*, and especially the *Story of Ulysses* and *Two Little Confederates*.

Connelly Springs never could boast of a newspaper, but for a short time Coulter squeezed out enough time from his many business activities to write an occasional news report to the *Morganton Herald* (later the *News-Herald*). For a short time Bergen Bollinger, a freelancer somewhat on the order of R. Don Law and his *Yellow Jacket* of Moravian Falls, got out a few issues of a sheet which he called the *Truth Teller*, which in reality was not a newspaper.

The quickest communications Connelly Springs had with the outside world besides the telegraph was by the "fast vestibule" mail trains until 1901, when J. A. Martin of Hickory put up a telephone line from Hickory to Morganton by way of Connelly Springs, Rutherford College, and Valdese. A direct line to Lenoir, in Caldwell County, was not erected until 1915. In the early 1920's the Connelly Springs Telephone Company was set up, which soon gave way to the Tri-County Telephone Company, which in turn was succeeded by the Blue Ridge Telephone Company, and in 1931 the Hickory Telephone Company took over.

Electric lights began to shine in the village in 1921, when the Connelly Springs Light & Power Company (W. J. Davis, President; D. W. Alexander, Treasurer) began distributing electricity. And now Coulter had his residence wired and abandoned his various types of lighting with kerosene and other inventions, saving a few lamps for emergencies. Radios were beginning to make their appearance by 1924, but Coulter noted on February 13 that he had not yet heard one.

The highway from Hickory to Morganton and on to Asheville passed down the main business street of Connelly Springs until April, 1919, when a new highway left the village about a quarter of a mile to the southward. This change was the result of a campaign to build a highway from the coast to the Tennessee line (or in the common oratorical flourishes, "From Murphy to Manteo" or "From Cherokee to Currituck"). Deprived of its importance of being on the main line, Connelly Springs was some years later (in 1937) given the consolation of having its main street paved with tar and gravel.

From his earliest days in the "Nation" Coulter was interested in good roads. In 1884 he was road overseer in Bandys Township of Catawba County on the Hickory-Shelby road from the Burke County line to Jacobs Fork River. When he moved to Connelly Springs he became road overseer in Lovelady Township for many years. The

duty of the overseer was to require all males from 18 to 45 years of age to work the road on which they lived 6 days of 9 hours every year or to be excused by paying \$4.00 if they owned no livestock or vehicles, or otherwise to pay \$5.00. The law was slightly changed in 1915, and abandoned when automobiles came.

By 1911 the "good roads movement" had hit North Carolina, and there was organized the North Carolina Good Roads Association with Joseph Hyde Pratt, the secretary, having his headquarters in Chapel Hill. Coulter was president of the local branch in Connelly Springs. The first big aim of the state association was the promotion of a central highway the whole length of the state. There was strong agitation for a bond issue. Not until the 1920's did the state get its good roads program under way. But Lovelady Township could not wait so long. It began grading new roads and topping them with sand clay, with Ed Abernethy and his scoops and road plows doing much of the work. In 1915 Coulter had wooden sign pointers nailed with ten-penny spikes on posts erected at the intersection of all important roads.

Another long-sought road improvement was a bridge across the Catawba River beyond Rutherford College near the John Cassels residence. After some years of agitation and a final agreement with the Caldwell County authorities, the bridge was begun in 1906 and completed the next year. It was built by the Roanoke Bridge Company of Virginia. A new bridge was built in 1962.

Connelly Springs was a trading center for a hinterland for some miles in all directions and many of the people living in this region came to the village for their mail occasionally. Why should they not be given the advantages of the Rural Free Delivery Service? That was what they wanted to know especially after W. P. Haliburton had been studying the regions to the southward and had worked up a route for delivering the mail. So on May 1, 1905 R.F.D. No. 1 was authorized by the United States postal authorities, and Haliburton became the first carrier. In his little buggy (later a small box-like one) he made the distance of about 20 miles, rain or shine. On February 1, 1906 R.F.D. No. 2 was authorized, and George A. Hauss became the carrier. R.F.D. No. 3 came June 1, 1907, with James R. Huffman the carrier; and No. 4, April 1, 1912, with Cleveland R. Perkins.

In 1912 Coulter's brother Frank had worked up this fourth route, hoping that he would secure the appointment as carrier. Frank had been associated in business almost all of his life with his brother John Ellis, working either for or with him. He had sawed shingles, had done carpentry work, clerked in stores, run the farm of "Coulter & Coulter" for a year, run a store of his own and was a partner in a store with



John Ellis for a year or two. In 1893 he joined the Westward Movement and took a fling at Texas, going to Bowie where he worked on a farm for a time and then clerked in the store of Jule Sigmon & A. P. Seitz, North Carolina acquaintances who had preceded him. But he soon concluded that Texas was a strange place; some things he liked fine and some things he could not stand. He wrote that "the wind blows awful here," so hard that a person could not see a foot ahead—and it had not rained for four months. The coldest weather he ever felt was there but it lasted only two or three days. The day might start out warm enough "to work with your coat off & in less than an hour it will be so cold that one can't stand it." He was back in North Carolina early the next year.

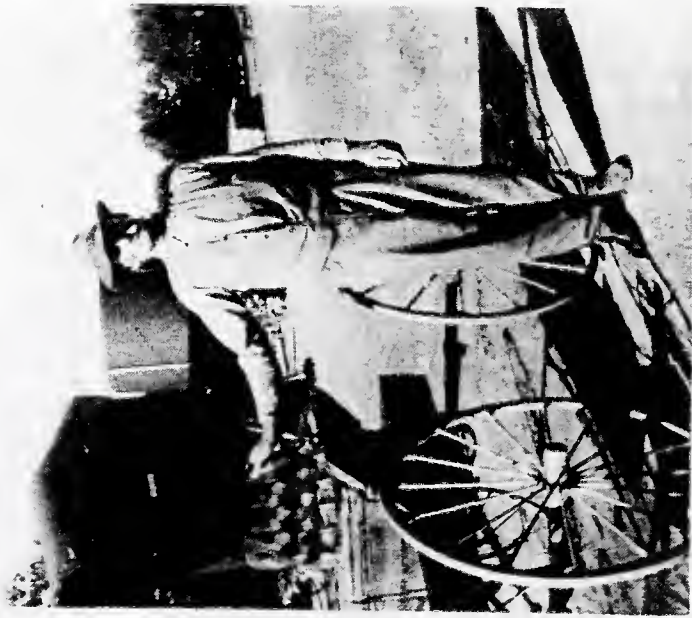
In 1895 he moved out to Rutherford College to enter school in the college there; but after he had met Della Parker, school meant nothing to him. He quit and on August 21, 1895 he married her and wrote his parents, "Of course, I think I have the best woman in the world." Four children came to this union: Robert, Ruth, Margaret, and Frances.

Having no occupation so fixed that he could not leave it, he worked up the R.F.D. route and stood the examination. Various citizens wrote strong letters of recommendation, including D. P. Goode who said that the people along the route would be disappointed if Frank Coulter did not get it, and added: He "is one of our best citizens, capable, & courteous & has the *full* confidence of all the people on the route. He is scrupulously sober, abstaining from all drinks of alcoholic taints." His brother John Ellis pulled all the political strings he could find, but brother Frank did not receive the appointment. It seems that his civil service examination did not prove satisfactory.

Two years later Coulter, himself, was more lucky in pursuit of an idea he had that he would like to be the village postmaster. Congressman E. Yates Webb, a great friend of Coulter's, suggested that he stand the civil service examination and Webb promised "to see that you get a square deal." Horace Goode and the other Democratic political powers lined up behind Coulter, and he decided to stand the examination; but there was a woman who wanted the position, Miss Sally Abernethy, a sister of Ben, and Coulter not wanting to stand in her way told Webb that if she passed the examination, he would not be an applicant for the position. But Coulter went ahead and stood the examination for there was a prominent Republican who also was standing the examination, and if he passed and Miss Abernethy did not, and assuming that Coulter would pass, then he would take the place to prevent the Republican from getting it. Coulter passed with the highest mark, but as Miss Abernethy passed and was one



*Left: UNCLE BILLY HILL. Right: HUGH SUTHERLAND, SR.*



*Left:* GEORGE A. HAUSS, RAILWAY WATER TANK IN BACKGROUND. *Right:* J. M. (MORT) SIDES, RAILWAY STATION AND PINK HUDSON'S STORE IN BACKGROUND.



**Connelly Mineral Springs Hotel**  
 Connelly Springs, N. C.

THE GREATEST LUNcheon and Banquet Hall in the South

Wm. JEFF BAIN, Manager and Proprietor  
 formerly of Raleigh, N. C.

Rooms for Board and Lodging  
 Bathing and Dressing  
 Billiard and Pool  
 Tennis and Croquet  
 Golf and Country Club  
 Hunting and Fishing  
 and all kinds of amusements

WATER: Very Pure  
 Temperature 68 to 70  
 It is the only natural  
 spring water in the State  
 and is the only one  
 that is not only pure  
 but also delicious

Write for Booklet and  
 Circulars giving full  
 particulars of the  
 Hotel and Springs



Left: CONNELLY SPRINGS HOTEL. (Top Part), HOTEL SPRINGHOUSE (Middle), AND MORGANTON COURTHOUSE. Right: LETTERHEADS OF CONNELLY SPRINGS BUSINESS-HOUSES.

*Connelly Springs, N. C.*

**Bought of McHenry, Worlick & Co.,**  
 AND DEALERS IN  
**PLUG, TWIST AND SMOKING TOBACCO.**

*Connelly Springs, N. C.*

**D. P. HUDSON,**  
 MANUFACTURER  
 Connelly Springs, N. C.

**Connelly Springs, N. C. July 25th 1900**  
**H. C. Borden**  
 In Account With  
**WHEENBARROWS**  
 Fully Billed  
 And Nothing But  
 Steel Wheels used.

12 wheels	120
2 sets of axles	50
Wagon wheels	100
4 sets of axles	200
Wagon wheels	100
4 sets of axles	200
Wagon wheels	100





of the highest three, Coulter withdrew and Miss Abernethy received the appointment. Webb had promised that he would go down the line for her if she passed, and remarked, "You are a generous and magnanimous man." This was the nearest Coulter ever came to holding a government office, political, or otherwise, unless being mayor of Connelly Springs was such an office.

For at least twenty years after Coulter moved to Connelly Springs, its only industrial activity was his sawmill and grist mill and a blacksmith shop which he rented to Joe Aiken for \$1.00 a month. In 1903 there were nibbling inquiries about the possibilities of establishing a cotton mill in the village. The Alpine Cotton Mills in Morganton (W. A. Erwin, President; B. N. Duke, Vice-President), inquired privately of Coulter whether the hill on the south side of the railroad where a Baptist church had recently been built could be bought, and also whether the big hotel building in town might be leased for three years to house the hands while residences for them were being built. The wood and water supply available was one of the strong inducements in setting up a mill there. They promised not to come into competition with the town merchants by setting up a company store. Nothing came of this chance for the village to take on some growth.

Ten years later it appeared that the village was on its way. The Connelly Springs Knitting Mill Company was incorporated with a capital of \$100,000, with all the stock sold immediately. It manufactured hosiery. It appears that Coulter bought no stock but he furnished it with steam—electricity had not yet come to Connelly Springs. For a year or more during 1916-1917 Coulter's son Alvin Augustus ran a canvas glove mill.

Connelly Springs was now on a boom. In 1919 the Blue Ridge Cotton Mill began operations. Coulter furnished it lumber, power, and bought stock in it. In 1927 the building burned and the company became defunct. The next year Coulter and B. L. Ledwell bid in the ruins and the lot for the taxes and the lawyer, sheriff, and advertisement fees, for a total of \$1,232.55. This misfortune marked the end of Connelly Spring's industrial boom.

The most famous institution in the village for many years was the Connelly Springs Hotel. News of the discovery of the mineral spring there soon spread far and wide. The Meroney brothers, Thomas J. and Philip J., of Salisbury were the first to act. Sensing the possibilities of developing a great tourist summer resort here, near the foothills of the mountains, attracting people from the lowlands and elsewhere by the equitable climate and healing waters, the Meroneys bought the spring and the lands surrounding it. In 1884 they secured from



D. P. Goode and Emma Connelly, sister of his wife,  $\frac{5}{8}$  of an acre for \$350. At the same time they bought from W. W. Connelly for \$1,300 a tract of  $3\frac{3}{4}$  acres containing the spring, "reserving to the said Wm. W. Conley and his family the right and privilege to pass over said lands and to use for the benefit of said William Connelly and his family the water of the mineral spring situated thereon as well as the use of the free stone spring of water situated thereon." Connelly lived on the hill just west of the spring on the north side of the railway and needed these water rights. The Meroney brothers immediately began the construction of a large hotel, two stories, with wide commodious porches extending the whole length of the building and across the front end, upstairs and down, all set off with dormer windows and a high three-story tower near the middle. They also built a row of cottages on the walkway leading down to the spring. An attractive spring house with lattice work enclosed the spring which was walled-in with concrete approaches. Soon a two-story ball-room was built where dances were frequently held on the second floor. The ground floor accommodated a bowling alley. During the season a string band made music for the dances and during meals. The Hotel music was a familiar sound throughout most of the village.

The Hotel building was completed in 1886 and in July of this year the Meroneys bought from D. P. Goode a strip of land for \$400 on the east side of the Hotel property, extending "to a stone a short distance from D. P. Goode's large gate that you passed through going from his house to the hotel." The next year the attractive name of Happy Home for the village was given up for the name Connelly Springs; but the reason is evident—the latter name was in itself an advertisement for the Hotel. In 1890 the Meroneys sold to W. C. Coughenour of Salisbury for \$6,000 a half interest in their enterprise "known as Connellys, . . . situate on the Western North Carolina Road near Icard station (now Connellys Station)."

Thomas J. Meroney, a bachelor, died in Morganton in January, 1891. His death led to a reorganization of the enterprise, resulting in setting up the same month the Connelly Springs Company. This company extended its land holdings by buying two or more small tracts that year, from W. W. Connelly and D. P. Goode.

With the Asheville-Hendersonville "Land of the Sky" region not yet sufficiently developed and advertised as a summer resort Utopia, the Connelly Springs Hotel thrived mightily. The *Morganton Herald* reported in 1890 that the Hotel for "several years [had] enjoyed a great and growing reputation as a summer resort." Capitalists had erected "a handsome hotel," and its "waters have been found of highly curative influence in all kidney and bladder troubles, besides possessing

rare tonic virtues." Robert L. Abernethy, the president of Rutherford College, in advertising the healthful situation of his school, a mile and a half away, said that the hotel was "thronged the year round by invalids" and that its waters were shipped even to Europe. Truly had Abernethy spoken, for in February, 1891 ten cases of this water were sent to a gentleman in London, England, who had been a guest at the hotel and had drunk its waters.

In fact shipping this mineral water became a fairly lucrative business in itself. A half dozen years later, either this same gentleman or others in London, equally pleased with the water, were buying it, for the manager in 1897 sent to London eight cases "of the famous medicinal and health-giving Connelly mineral water, the fame of which has crossed the deep." This water was well advertised within the United States and for years scarcely a passenger train came through the village without a few demijohns of this water being loaded in the express car. Since it was not entirely satisfactory for well guests to be surrounded by invalids, the Hotel began to leave off the invitation for the sick to come and be healed—and in its latter days it announced, "No Consumptives Taken."

All through the 1890's the Hotel flourished uncommonly. During one week in July, 1891 the following guests arrived: 77 from North Carolina; 5 from Florida; 4 from South Carolina; 2 from Maryland; and one each from Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia. The guests included governors of the state and other high officials, as well as persons celebrated in other professions. The Reverend J. W. Weston spent some time there and left much improved in his health. He became well known for his book in which he sought to prove that Napoleon's famous Marshal Ney had not been executed but had escaped to America and taught for many years in North Carolina and was actually the Peter Stuart Ney who was buried in the Third Creek Presbyterian Churchyard, near Statesville.

Beginning in the early 1890's it became a yearly custom for a large group of Bostonians to spend much of the winter at the Hotel, coming principally for quail-shooting and for the leisure found in a small village. Certain of the villagers with horses and buggies and knowing where plenty of quail could be found did a profitable business taking these men out into the country. Their comings and goings were worth a news item in the Morganton newspaper. In February, 1899 it was reported: "All the Massachusetts hunters have gone home." There were also other Yankee "bird-shooters" who regularly came to Connelly Springs.

Most of the building operations at the Hotel had taken place before Coulter moved to Connelly Springs, but he supplied lumber and other

building materials for the ball-room, for some of the cottages, and for an addition to the Hotel of twenty rooms made in 1911. Also while he was in the mercantile business he helped to supply the Hotel table. Evidence on the pages of store ledger books indicate that, whatever else went on the tables, there was a sufficiency of chickens and eggs. In August of 1891 (before Coulter had come to Connelly Springs) the firm of Connelly & Sides sold to the Hotel almost 400 chickens and nearly 100 dozen eggs. During the previous month, while the watermelon season was on, the guests consumed 229 watermelons bought from Connelly & Sides, and probably others bought from countrymen who brought them to town in their wagons. Guests often took strolls up "Huckleberry Street" and seeing Coulter's peach-trees loaded with luscious fruit, they would prevail on Lucy Ann to sell them a few dozen.

In 1900 the Hotel was put up for sale and in the course of time there was organized the Connelly Springs Mineral Springs Hotel Company, which was a going concern in 1903. It came into being through the sale to it of the Hotel property by Horace W. Connelly who had bought it at a foreclosure sale held on May 19, 1902. Dr. W. M. McGalliard of Donaldsonville, Louisiana, was the chief stockholder in the new company. Coulter seems to have been interested in it financially in a minor way. In 1904 Horace W. Connelly again bought it, but since he died in June of the next year, the ownership of the property was soon up for change again. Henry Vanstory now came into possession of it either as owner or both owner and proprietor, for he was running it for some years until William Jeff Davis bought and ran it until it closed, eking out an existence chiefly as the residence of the Davis family until the time of the Second World War, when it was sold to certain Winston-Salem interests, who demolished it for the excellent lumber with which it had been built.

In the face of competition from "The Land of the Sky" Davis had sought to make a go of it by advertising it with many catchy phrases and rates: "Right on Main Line of Southern Railway, midway between Salisbury and Asheville—In the Foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains—Is 1200 Feet above Sea Level. Said to be Healthiest Country in the State—Splendid Mineral Water for Indigestion, Nervousness, Rheumatism and all Blood Diseases—Dancing and other Amusements. An Ideal Place to spend your Vacation—No Consumptives Taken—Rates: May, June, September, October, \$6 to \$8 Per Week. \$18 to \$30 Per Month. July, August, \$7 to \$10 Per Week. \$22. to \$36. Per Month." Even such rates could not save the Hotel.

During its history of a half century the Hotel had a series of managers or "Proprietors," and among the early managers and the



best known was Ben Abernethy, who dabbled in almost every kind of activity that the village afforded (but longest as railway agent). In 1897 he had succeeded Henry Williams, who returned to Salisbury, and he continued until October, 1905. Ben always remained a bachelor, and while running the Hotel his sister Lillie lived there until her marriage to a Mr. Gaul of Maiden in March, 1899.

W. P. Haliburton, an experienced hotel man, who had run a hotel at Piedmont Springs, near Walnut Grove, in Stokes County, and who had in one way or another been associated with Connelly Springs for a long time, decided in 1902 to erect a small hotel up "Huckleberry Street," a half mile beyond the Coulter residence. Coulter furnished the lumber and other building material. Haliburton was fairly successful in this venture. The building stood until 1960, when unoccupied for several years, it was purposely fired and partly burned down to afford practice in fire-fighting for the Connelly Springs-Rutherford College Fire Department.

For those transients and residents who did not care for the style of a hotel, Miss Myra Lail (June 8, 1844-February 23, 1926) ran a boarding house under the name of the "Connelly Springs Inn." She was in this business before the turn of the twentieth century and continued for a dozen or more years thereafter. She bought many small items from Coulter: a goose for 50¢, a turkey for 70¢, and such other articles as goat mutton and stove wood.

In 1912, about the time Connelly Springs began to take on new industrial growth, suggestions were being made that the village needed a bank; but nothing was done until 1919, when the Peoples Bank was chartered and opened in October, with W. T. McGalliard, President; D. W. Alexander, Vice President; and J. G. Aiken, Cashier. It started out small and never grew to be very large: in December following its opening, resources were \$26,143.94 and paid in capital, \$5,900. By 1920 Coulter had bought 5 shares and he later bought 16 more. In 1926 the bank failed and Coulter lost his \$2,100 investment in stocks and also an assessment of an equal amount and whatever deposits he had in the bank at the time.

The years of buoyancy and expectation of great things to come were from 1913 to 1926. This was the period of new mills, a bank--and the incorporation of the village with all the tinsels, tassels, and frills of a city; but most of it was on paper or in the minds of the hopefuls. The village was incorporagted in 1920 and began operating as the "Town of Connelly Springs." Elections for mayor and aldermen were held on May 4, which resulted in the choice of Coulter by a unanimous vote of 54; and in the voting for five aldermen, the following were elected: R. D. Coulter (Ray, son of J. E.), 44; R. R. (Bob)

Ennis, 37; W. T. (Theo) McGalliard, 37; D. P. (Pink) Hudson, 35; and R. E. Loven, 33. J. G. Aiken was appointed Secretary-Treasurer. Coulter took the oath of office as mayor on the 13th, and the town was now ready for business. One of the immediate concerns of the Mayor and Aldermen was the appointment of a policeman to have the additional powers of a deputy sheriff. The Aldermen explained the need "because of intolerable conditions existing in and around Connelly Springs, N. C. to wit: manufacturing and selling spirituous liquors, carrying concealed weapons, gambling, speeding, and including almost the whole category of crimes"—an indictment sufficient to put the town in the class with the biggest cities. Philmore Deal now became the "visible law" in Connelly Springs as he proudly displayed a shiny silver police badge costing \$2.50. Philmore received \$3.00 a day for preserving order.

With law enforcement now in full swing, Mayor Coulter found grist for his court, which he held when needed. Culprits came before him for selling whiskey, getting drunk, profane swearing, resisting arrest, swinging trains, letting bulldogs run loose unmuzzled, skipping board bills, and so on—all of which received their appropriate fines ranging from \$2.00 to \$10.00.

The town did not depend entirely on the punishment of common law and statutory crimes for maintaining its peace and security. Its dignity had to be guaranteed in an elaborate set of "Laws and Ordinances," which were enacted and published in a 22-page booklet soon after the town was set going. There were nine chapters as follows: "Amusements—Exhibitions, Shows, Etc.," "Animals—Live Stock, Dogs, etc.," "Fire Precautions," "Good Order, Etc.," "Streets, Sidewalks, Etc.," "Railroad Companies," "Licenses, Fees, Permits, Taxes," "Traffic and Vehicles," and "Health . . . Meat, and Other Foods." Included was an ordinance to raise revenues by setting forth tax rates and license fees.

The production of any farce or play, tricks, juggling acts, slight of hand, or the show of animals or menageries "or any curiosity of nature or art," without first getting a permit was punishable by a fine of \$50.00. No animal was allowed to run loose, and horses and mules must be secured to hitching posts back of the stores. Dogs must not run loose without a tag, and it was a \$10.00 fine to let an unmuzzled bulldog "or other vicious or dangerous dog" be loose on the streets. The sale of fireworks was forbidden, and no one was allowed to pop firecrackers or to shoot cannon crackers or Roman candles. To set a trash fire within ten feet of a fence or building was forbidden on peril of a fine of as much as \$50.00.

In preserving "Good Order" none of the following was allowed:

profanity or indecent language; "indecent or lewd dress" or singing "sacreligious, indecent, vulgar, or lewd song or words"; drunks; notorious characters or prostitutes to walk or ride the streets between 7 p.m. and 4 a.m.; loafing around the depot, hotel or public places; playing ball, shouting, shooting guns or bow and arrows or any "missiles of any description from slings, spring guns or instruments of any kind"; making loud noise "with any whistle, gong, horn, bell or other things" except when necessary by automobiles and trains; spitting or throwing trash on the sidewalks; begging; any public disturbance by word or act or concert or play; gambling; and slot machines and punch boards. Most of these crimes were subject to a \$50.00 fine.

The mayor was instructed to keep the streets clean and unobstructed. Trains must not run through town at more than 15 miles an hour and must ring their bells; and crossings must not be blocked more than 5 minutes. No one except trainmen was allowed "to swing" a train in motion, and there must be no loitering in the waiting rooms at the depot.

No business might be transacted without a license, including all vehicles for hire. Automobiles must use mufflers, and speed not more than 9 miles an hour in the business district, and 14 miles an hour in residential sections.

In the interest of health, all food for sale must be sanitary; no decayed matter to be thrown on a lot; and no cow, horse or mule stable to be nearer than 50 feet from a residence.

The ordinance to raise revenues provided a poll tax of \$1.00; real and personal property to be taxed 25¢ on the \$100; males between 21 and 45 years of age to do street work 6 days a year or pay a street tax of \$3.00. License fees ranged from \$1.00 for a barber shop with one chair (50¢ for each additional chair) to \$25.00 for automobile agents, fortune tellers, and hypnotists. Male dogs were taxed \$1.00; bitches, \$2.00.

All of these laws and regulations were "a big bill of fare" suddenly to set before a people who had lived a leisurely life in a respectable little village; but they represented the conscience of this moment of exhilaration, and in fact most of these regulations had been instinctively part of the people's customs. They were a warning to criminally inclined people and to outsiders. Of course all these fees and taxes were something new, and would ultimately bring about the demise of the town government.

Apart from Policeman Philmore Deal's control of the lawless, Mayor Coulter was the chief authority of government in the town. It was he who had to see that the wheels of government turned round, that



fees and taxes were assessed and collected, that the streets were kept in order, and that the guilty were punished.

As it took "money to make the mare go," also it took money to make the government go; and so, assessing property and levying taxes was Mayor Coulter's first and most continuous job. The rate on personal and real property was soon reduced to 12¢ on the \$100. The number of polls and dogs varied with the years, and each bore a fixed rate, but neither produced much revenue. In 1923 there were 96 polls and 21 dogs. Personal and real property assessments (including local corporations) ran from \$104,263 for the Blue Ridge Cotton Mill (later reduced to \$50,760) down through W. J. Davis with his Hotel for \$27,838, through Mayor Coulter with his various enterprises for \$24,100, and on down to almost nothing. The taxes collected in 1921 were \$124.50 from the Blue Ridge Cotton Mill; \$33.41 from Davis; \$33.92 from Coulter (for some unknown reason more than Davis whose property was assessed higher); and on down to 10¢.

If the town had been forced to depend on these local taxes, it probably never would have been incorporated. There was a "foreign" corporation which the "city fathers" had their eyes on, the Southern Railway. There were two others which would not be nearly so lucrative in taxes, the Western Union Telegraph Company and the Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company. The assessments of the value of the properties of these corporations was set by the state, with which the local authorities would have to be content.

The Railway had 1.83 miles within the corporate limits of the town, whose value the state fixed at \$93,288.27 per mile (apparently including all the Railway's property inside the town limits). As a result the Southern Railway became the biggest taxpayer, paying \$204.86 at one time and \$254.20 in 1924, being almost half of all taxes collected during some years.

The taxes paid by the telegraph and telephone companies were negligible. They were assessed according to wire mileage, not by the length of the pole line. The Western Union had 9.15 miles of wire inside the town limits, which was assessed at \$664 and the value of the telephone company's property was fixed at \$823. The taxes of neither company was as much as \$1.00 a year.

The total property inside the town limits was generally assessed at a little more than \$400,000. Added to the taxes on this property were the license fees. The total revenues amounted to a little more than \$500 annually, varying some with the years. In 1925 there was collected \$578.68 and expended \$501.17. At one time the town found it necessary to borrow \$200 from Mayor Coulter, who was not paid back until 1928. In the latter days of the town's existence as a corpora-

tion it appeared that there might be another source of revenue, when in 1928 a company was given the franchise to manufacture gas for light, power, and fuel and to lay gas mains; but nothing came of it.

The expenses of the town government were not great. Neither the mayor nor the aldermen received salaries, nor anyone else except Policeman Philmore Deal. It cost in the beginning \$7.00 to lay off the town limits; and after street lights had been provided the cost of electricity was from \$5.00 to \$6.00 a month, paid first to the Connelly Springs Light and Power Company and after 1925 to its successor the Southern Power Company.

As time went on it began to appear to many citizens that this town government was an unnecessary imposition on the people and their freedom to carry on their business without troublesome license fees. The government was not serving any real need—there were no more crimes committed here than in any other little community and some citizens felt that Connelly Springs was freer from petty crimes than most places its size. And there were never any major crimes.

The prohibition against selling and popping firecrackers greatly displeased the "small fry," and some of the "oldsters." About the time of the firecracker season one year, a petition to the mayor and aldermen was circulated and signed by many of the citizens praying that they allow firecrackers to be sold and popped, and it was promised by the seller that he would not handle "any firecrackers of the large and dangerous variety" and it was argued that "it has been the tradition that all children and open-minded citizens demand fire works for the proper celebration of Christmas."

In an attempt to allay discontent, the town government revised the laws and ordinances and left out many of the provisions of the 1920 edition, reducing the booklet to 13 pages. Elections for town officers could be held every two years but not oftener. Mayor Coulter served until 1924, but refused to stand in the election that year. W. J. Alexander was elected mayor, but resigned four days later. There was now a succession of mayors elected by the aldermen, none of whom served long and some not even accepting election. Included in those elected were B. L. Ledwell, E. A. Dean, W. W. Berry, W. A. Haliburton, and R. L. Pyatt.

If "the old man of the sea" could not be shaken off the people's neck by officials resigning or refusing to serve, there appeared to be another remedy—ask the legislature to pass a law allowing the people to vote on repealing the town charter. Such a law was passed in 1925 providing for the election to be held on May 5th. The election took place and resulted in defeating the charter repeal. In 1929 another election was held in which the repeal was defeated by only two votes.

On April 7, 1930 at the last meeting of the aldermen to be recorded in the minutes book a motion was carried "to take steps to have the charter of the Town of Connelly Springs repealed." The town government would now die of neglect if not voted out of existence, and the village be allowed to return to the pristine happiness of a state of nature except as limited by the interference of North Carolina and the United States.



## CHAPTER XII

### RUTHERFORD COLLEGE, VALDESE, AND MORGANTON

A mile and a half northwest of Connelly Springs, a village which came to be called Rutherford College grew up around a log schoolhouse. On a slightly different spot this log schoolhouse grew into a college. And here came the realization of the dream and ambition of Robert Laban Abernethy.

Abernethy was a native of Lincoln County, born April 23, 1822. He became a Methodist preacher in 1846 and began wandering around saving souls, as far away as Burke and Caldwell counties. During slack preaching times he taught schools wherever he could organize them, and in a school he was teaching in Caldwell County, one of his pupils, Mary Anne Hayes, greatly attracted him. On February 11, 1847 he married her. He soon moved across the Catawba River and in 1853 set up his log schoolhouse on the future location of the village of Rutherford College. During the Civil War he was postmaster at Happy Home—though according to tradition he did some preaching and teaching in the mountainous upper end of Burke and did a little tax collecting for the Confederate Government. If tradition be correct, he must have employed an assistant to see after the post office while he was away; or very probably the post office was closed during most of the war years, for the Confederacy discontinued many of the post offices it inherited.

With the war over, Abernethy began again his teaching in the little settlement, first called Excelsior, which had begun to grow up around his schoolhouse. His fame as a teacher spread and a goodly number of Confederate veterans began to appear as his pupils. An old acquaintance, John Rutherford, who it seems had helped the school at an earlier time, now about 1871 offered Abernethy 200 acres of land if he would make the school into an academy. And so it became

Rutherford Academy. With further aid offered if the academy should be elevated into a college, Abernethy got the necessary permission from the legislature, and in 1873 it became Rutherford College. Apparently the village about this time became known as Rutherford College, but not until January 11, 1881 was a post office established there. The first postmaster was Zebedee F. Rush, a Methodist preacher. Previously the Rutherford College people had got their mail at the Happy Home (Connelly Springs) post office.

The college now entered upon a remarkable period of usefulness; students came from far and near and were inspired into lives of great usefulness, always remembering this school, which had given them their start. In 1879 a large new building was constructed, containing an excellent chemical laboratory and a library of about 10,000 books, all valued at not less than \$25,000. Also there were two literary societies, the Newtonians and the Platonics, which were looked upon by their members as being of equal importance with the college instruction itself, as they gave themselves excellent training in debating, declaiming, and orating. There was hot rivalry between the societies, which sometimes broke out in open warfare with the threat of the use of deadly weapons. President Abernethy estimated in 1890 that at least 8,000 students had been instructed there since the beginning in 1853. Year after year the commencement exercises were outstanding, fit for governors of the state to attend, and on an occasion or two actually attended by a governor and always by the countryside for many miles around. People looked forward from one year to the next to going to the Rutherford College Commencement. In 1890 a special reunion-of-old-students commencement was held, lasting three days, attended by about 2,000 people. Many degrees, A.B. and B.S., were awarded, and to President Abernethy's 18-year-old son Arthur Talmadge Abernethy, already a prodigy, went the degree of Master of Arts.

Besides the commencements there were other occasions, both literary and social, which drew the townsmen, as well as the citizens from the nearby towns and villages and from the surrounding country. The county newspaper, the *Morganton Herald*, describing a Valentine and musical party given by the college, noted that the "citizens, ladies and bird-hunters of Connelly Springs were present, and enjoyed the occasion."

The year 1890 was also a year of tragedy. On August 9, about 1 o'clock a.m., to the horror of everybody the building was discovered in flames. Nothing could be done to save anything, as the whole population of the village stood by helpless. Unbowed by this mis-

fortune, Abernethy took to the road to raise money for rebuilding his college. With many small gifts, a magnificent contribution of \$1,100 by Benjamin N. Duke of tobacco fame, and a loan of \$2,000 by George A. Gray of Gastonia (guaranteed by a mortgage on the new building), Abernethy was able to complete the new college structure by the summer of the following year.

The institution now rose from its ashes with its old-time vigor. In 1893 there were 173 students in attendance. But there was more tragedy in store for the college. The next year while riding horseback Dr. Abernethy (he held the Doctor of Divinity degree) was thrown and hurt internally. He kept going until suddenly on November 27 he died. For the building to have burned was bad enough, but for the man who had created the institution to die was much worse. He had made the college, he had run the college, the college was his—there was no board of trustees—but it was not his to make a profit. Many of his students who came without purse, he assisted through college. And his students, old and new, venerated him. On his seventieth birthday, in 1892, they gave him a clerical suit of clothes; but this was nothing new—it was an old custom, which had already resulted in giving him about fifteen suits. Some years later a modest monument was erected to his memory, from funds contributed by old students. The *Press and Carolinian*, a Hickory newspaper, said at the time of his death: "There are scores of men and women whom he has educated in all that they know. . . . The beneficiaries of his charities today live in one-half of the States of the Union."

His death meant the death of the Abernethy era of Rutherford College. His son Will became president and the college struggled along under the load of the \$2,000 mortgage until 1897, when its doors were closed. In 1900 the Western North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Church paid off the mortgage and took over the college. They reduced it now to a first-class preparatory school, with a faculty of unusual excellence. Dr. Charles C. Weaver (Ph.D. from the Johns Hopkins University) was made principal with A. C. Reynolds, a natural-born teacher, as co-principal. Dr. Henry McG. Wagstaff (another Ph.D. from the Johns Hopkins) and others made up the faculty. The college now entered upon a new lease of life and of great usefulness.

The village of Rutherford College would never have grown up without the college; the college and the village were almost one and the same. It was severely a religious community, Methodist but not puritanical. During the 1880's religion was here being broadcast almost as widely, and on certain occasions with vastly more force, than was



education. For some years during this decade, a great religious festival was held in the late summer, centering in a great tabernacle structure open to the breezes except for a roof, seating at least 8,000 people. Generally the festival lasted from a week to ten days, and as many as forty sermons would be preached.

Of course there was the village Methodist Church and the nearby cemetery. This cemetery began with its first grave in 1855, being that of William L. Connelly, who was killed by a stroke of lightning. The tradition has long continued, apparently based on truth, that the second grave accommodated an unfortunate citizen who was killed by the kick of a mule.

The village was not incorporated until the twentieth century, but no local government was necessary to keep high the conscience of the community. Crime and lewdness were not tolerated. In the early 1890's there was a tendency for certain people of low morality to pass through Rutherford College on their way from Caldwell County where they had been able to find whiskey, and being unable to resist a dram from their jugs they came through slightly uneven on their legs. On an occasion one such wayfarer lost his little handbag and jug in the village, "and some good boys finding them, smashed the jug against a tree. The poor fellow returning in search of his lost god and finding it demolished, cried and snuffled like a baby, and being informed who had broken his jug, spent a few moments in volleys of oaths, and then ran like a wild turkey, as well he might."

In attracting respectable families to settle in the village and especially to bring in new students, President Abernethy emphasized the healthfulness of the region (mentioning sometimes the famous waters of Connelly Springs). He declared that Rutherford College had "become proverbial as a health resort as well as for its educational facilities."

Many excellent families came in during the Abernethy era, either to educate their children or to settle in a cultured community. There were the Greenwades, the Gunters, the Crisps, the Frank Coulters, the Wilsons, the Cherrys, the Estes, the Parkers, the Goodes, the Lefevers, the Johnsons, the Hills, the Peelers, the Lucks, the Morrisises, and others, some of whom had been long there; and there were many who would come in the twentieth century. A. L. (Gus) Lefevers, L. L. (Lank) Estes, and Joe Wilson were well-known merchants.

Apart from old Dr. Abernethy, probably no one was more beloved than W. C. ("Uncle Billy") Hill, who "was loved by all who ever attended school there and respected by the entire community." He was a bachelor, a son of a Baptist preacher of Stokes County, and a

Confederate veteran. Uncle Billy with his blue eyes, ruddy complexion, and a snow-white Santa-Claus beard, was best known in two capacities: as mail carrier from Rutherford College to Connelly Springs and as a fiddler who could have brought tears to the eyes of Bob Taylor—and probably did.

He began carrying the mail about 1890, in a locked sack thrown across his shoulders as he walked the mile and a half, but sometimes riding; and probably seldom if ever did he receive a raise in the pittance pay he received. Coulter in 1913 took it upon himself to try to get an increase by writing to Senator Simmons in Washington. Uncle Billy was a favorite with the children in both villages, always having a little joke to tell or to quote some Latin expression—most likely from Julius Caesar.

Often called the "fiddler from the mountains," he was ranked in 1899 by the *Burke County News* (another county paper later to be merged with the *Herald*) as "among the best violinists of the country." On certain occasions he played with the stringed band at the Connelly Springs Hotel, and many times he played at college gatherings. In 1915 with his violin he was the leader of a 5-piece orchestra which made music at the Newtonian Annual Debate. The other members were Mrs. W. M. Mann (Lucile Goode) at the piano, L. E. Webb with his banjo, Theo Griffin with his guitar, and Joe Griffin as second violinist. Uncle Billy's favorite solo was "The Downfall of Paris," and those who heard him could almost believe it was falling down.

Living by himself during his last few years in the old Hill home, where formerly his brother and family had kept house, he gave up all activities and was unable to putter around far. But he never wanted for company and attention; he was constantly visited by the students and his niece gave him complete care. He died at the age of 74 in 1917. The *Morganton News-Herald* commented: "Many hearts will be filled with sorrow at the news that the fiddler of the mountains is no more. He has entertained thousands all over the state with his violin."

Down to the turn of the twentieth century, the most important family in Rutherford College was the Abernethys. Robert Laban Abernethy and his wife had fourteen children—eleven of whom reached maturity and some distinction. Most of the men became prominent in the Methodist ministry and the women married well. A daughter, Mrs. Paris M. Rutherford, who was historically minded, wrote and preserved accounts of the old institution and passed the zeal on down to her children. Roberta, "one of the fairest young ladies of the place," was married in 1890 to Professor M. Boekbinder, "an accomplished Englishman" and a graduate of "the most thorough

musical institution in Europe." He was at the time on the faculty of the college and the head of "the *best* musical department in the State." This marriage did not last and later Roberta became the wife of Harley Goode. Another daughter, Mrs. Emma Moore was for many years the village postmistress. "Granny" Abernethy continued to live for years after her husband had died, on down into the twentieth century, in the old home with the apple orchard, which she did not object to students raiding now and then.

John Abernethy, a Methodist preacher, said to have been the first graduate of his father's college, died in 1899. Will E., as has been noted, followed his father as president of the college; L. Burge was one of the professors for a time, as was Arthur Talmage.

No Abernethy, indeed no citizen of Burke County from the creation of the county on down, was ever to attain the versatility, the brilliancy, the eccentricity, and the ubiquity of Arthur Talmage Abernethy. It seems that he started out on the road to fame by becoming when he was only 14, "a professor" in his father's college (according to his memory—all the college records were burned in the fire of 1890). As has already appeared he was awarded a Master of Arts degree at the famous commencement in 1890. Immediately thereafter he hied himself away to Baltimore to enter the Johns Hopkins University, where he was a student during the year 1890-1891, studying Greek and Latin under the famous Basil L. Gildersleeve and other savants. In a whimsical bit of autobiography which he called "my home-made Who's Zoo," he said he received an "honorary Master of Arts from Trinity (now Duke University) which they seem to have regretted conferring"; but the Duke keeper of the records wrote in answer to an inquiry: "I do not find a record for Arthur Talmage Abernethy." Had they in their "regrets" destroyed it?

With a mind bubbling over with everything to do and no time to do half of what bubbled up, it was evident that Arthur Talmage was not going to settle down and become a teacher. As he wrote in his "Who's Zoo," his father "prophesied that I would become President of the United States," but he shocked his parents "by becoming a telegraph operator, being for several years fastest Morse sender in the world." He was long in giving up his interest in telegraphy. He began as telegrapher in Burlington in 1891; in 1893 he accepted "an office in telegraphy in Atlanta, Ga."; beginning in 1895 and continuing for a year or more he was publishing in Rutherford College a monthly journal which he called *The Telegrapher*, which he largely filled up with fictional writing; for a short time in 1907 he was



**Geo. E. Mission & Co.**  
Importers

**Spach Bros.**  
Importers

**W. G. Post Office**

**J. W. Bailey**

**Walderston Hosiery Mills**

**J. W. Bailey**

LETTERHEADS OF VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS WITH WHICH COULTER DEALT.

**HUTTON & BOURBONNAIS,**  
Lumber, Boxes and Millwork  
Rutherford College, N.C.  
1897

**To Belwood Shoe Company, Dr.**  
F. W. CAMPBELL, Proprietor  
Manufacturers of Road Shoes, etc.

**W. H. E. Co. & Co.**  
Glen Alpine Milling Company  
High Grade Flour and Meal

**TRY SWEET MASH 9 in. 4s.**  
S. J. E. Co. & Co.

**Chatham Paper Co.**  
PAPER  
116

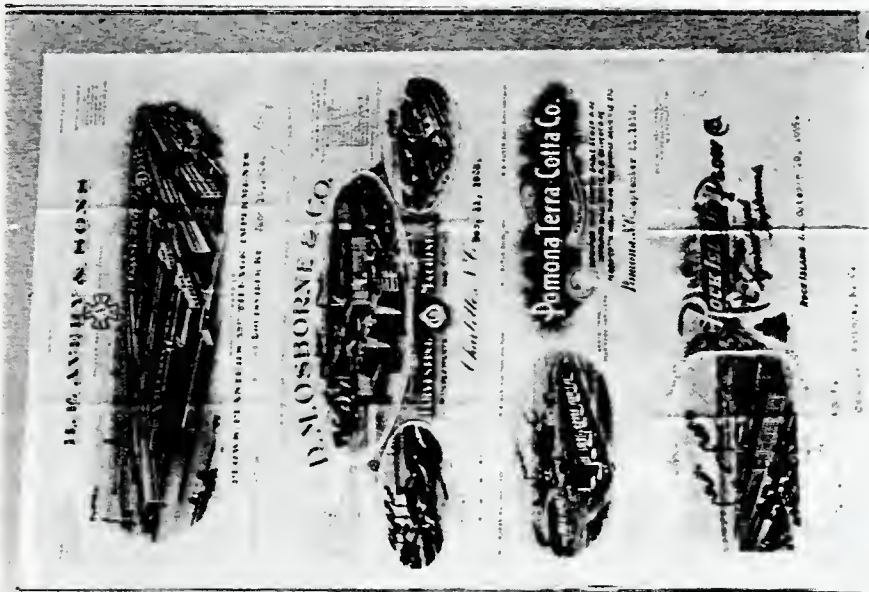
**W. W. Aiken**  
Rutherford College, N.C.  
1897

**L. L. ESTES**  
Dealer in General Merchandise  
COUNTRY PRODUCE  
APPLIANCE

**W. W. Aiken**  
Rutherford College, N.C.  
1897

LETTERHEADS OF VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS WITH WHICH COULTER DEALT.





Left: LETTERHEADS OF VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS WITH WHICH COULTER DEALT. Right: BOB REESE.





*Top:* RUTHERFORD COLLEGE. *Bottom:* WALDENSIAN CHURCH.

telegrapher at Connelly Springs under the new block system recently set up by the railway.

During the middle 1890's between telegrapher jobs Arthur Talmage, to quote from his "Who's Zoo" again, "traveled United States, Canada, Mexico, Cuba, and other heathen countries advertising patent medicine." One of the remedies he was advertising was "Warner's Safe Cure" and others were Dr. Harter's "The Only True Iron Tonic" and "Harter's Iron Bitters." But the Harter people were advertising Arthur Talmage as much as their remedies, for they issued a placard of about 5 by 7 inches with one side filled up almost entirely by a striking picture of young Abernethy, bearing this inscription: "Arthur T. Abernethy, 'The Young Man Eloquent' and Youngest Professor in America, Born October 10, 1872 in Rutherford College North Carolina, 'The Calhoun of the 19th Century.'"

It was about this time (to be exact, in November, 1895) that the pugnacity of Arthur Talmage and his two brothers, Will and Burge, asserted itself in a way that must have been a regret in later life; but all three thought that they had a cause that had to be pursued by methods other than those prescribed by law. It all had to do with the A. C. Gunter family who had moved from Connelly Springs to Rutherford College about 1892 and had become close friends of the Abernethys. Some chance remark by Gunter which rumor carried to the Abernethys as an attack on the morality of some of the women of the village, sparked Arthur, Burge, and Will into action. They stormed the residence with rocks and pistol shots and greatly frightened Gunter's daughter Viola (Mrs. Gunter had died in 1893); but Gunter had made his escape and had walked all the way to Morganton that night to seek protection from the sheriff and to swear out warrants for the arrest of the Abernethy brothers. They were arrested by Alex Perry, tried, and placed each under \$1,000 peace bond to await trial at the next term of Superior Court. Gunter said, "Whoever accuses me of slandering innocent women is an unmitigated liar." Included in the conspiracy was A. L. Lefevers, who was put under a \$200 peace bond. Most of the town seemed to have been up in arms against Gunter. A meeting of many of the townsmen took place in the Platonic Literary Society Hall in support of the Abernethys. They plead guilty at the term of Superior Court the next year and were assessed the costs, amounting to more than \$400, and were continued under a peace bond.

But this little episode had been no lesson to Arthur Talmage. The peace bond covered only Gunter and not the Goodes, with whom Arthur Talmage harbored some grudges. In 1897 the sheriff of Lincoln



County came to Rutherford College to arrest Mot DeLane, who happened to be a friend of Arthur Talmage's. The sheriff not knowing DeLane, as he passed through Connelly Spring, asked Horace (H. C.) Goode to go along to point out DeLane. Arthur Talmage followed Goode back to Connelly Springs and snapped his pistol several times in Goode's face; and when Horace went into his father's store to get a pistol, Abernethy departed. Goode had Abernethy arrested and in the trial the best S. J. Ervin, Sr., Abernethy's lawyer, could do for his client was to get him placed under a \$700 peace bond. These were unfortunate lapses in the high standards of the Abernethy family and were never to be repeated.

As might well be expected Arthur Talmage made no mention of these affairs in his "Who's Zoo"; but in his humorous recounting of his life he continued, "Worked on editorial staff of Pittsburg [*sic*] Post, Philadelphia Record, New York Press and Milwaukee Sentinel, where I helped make Milwaukee famous." Between newspaper assignments, he took time off to get into a little tussle of words with T. G. Cobb, editor and owner of the Morganton *Herald*. In 1896 Arthur Talmage sent out a form letter to most of the advertisers in the *Herald*, informing them that their advertisements were in no attractive form and might well bring no results, and that if each would send him 25¢ he would liven up their advertisements. He added that he did the bulk of such work in North Carolina and had managed the advertising business of Wanamaker's in Philadelphia as well as for Dr. Harter's Medicine Company and two other medicine companies. Cobb was not at all pleased with this interference with the way he was setting up his newspaper copy, and armed with letters from John Wanamaker and two medicine companies in reply to Cobb's inquiries, stating that they had never heard of Arthur Talmage, he bounced Abernethy with this information. Arthur Talmage answered Cobb by saying that he had not worked for John Wanamaker (and had never said so); it was for William H. Wanamaker, and as for the medicine companies, they had changed presidents since he had worked for them. His stationery at this time bore this heading: "Advertisement Writer, Editor of the 'Telegraph,' 'The Pulpit's Power,' Author of 'The Hell You Say' and 'In a Devil of a Fix,' Professor of Greek and Latin in Rutherford College, etc, etc, etc."

Arthur Talmage had a yen for his pen and took great satisfaction in using it. By 1926 he was printing on his letterhead "(Author of 41 Books)," a little later it was "(Author of 46 Books)," and by 1937 it was "(Author of 53 Books)." At this time he said that he had no list of them and that "in fact I have spent most of my time trying



to forget some of them." His first book, which was probably only a small pamphlet, was *The Mechanics and Practices of the Electric Telegraph*; but the work that got him most fame for the time was a piece of fiction which he called *The Hell You Say*. This unusual title, according to tradition, came about in this way: Arthur Talmage promised himself that when he should have finished the work he would name it the first expression he heard when he went out on the streets of Rutherford College. Meeting Lank Estes, he remarked, "Well, Lank, I have finished my book." Lank replied, "The Hell You Say." Abernethy years later remembered that the *Atlanta Constitution* had said of the book, "A North Carolina man has sworn his way into fame," and that the preachers had jumped on him so roughly that "I actually burned up the final edition of 1,500 copies rather than be lambasted so." But in 1912 the *Hickory Democrat*, which had printed the work in 1894 at a loss, was still advertising them for 50¢ each. Abernethy's title for some years after the book had appeared was "Hell You Say," and an acquaintance in 1897 remarked, "I hear that the 'Hell You Say' is in a hell of a fix." Abernethy had said that he guessed he would have to write a book and call it "In a Devil of a Fix," but it seems he never did. But soon after his "Hell You Say" book appeared he did write to a number of governors of states asking their opinions of the book. When he asked Governor William J. Stone of Missouri if he would read and criticise the book, the Governor replied, "Damfino; will if I can."

Another book which Arthur Talmage wrote, which was long remembered, was entitled *Did Washington Aspire to be King?* Among those whose opinion of the book he wanted was that of Coulter's, also offering him a copy for \$1.00. Abernethy said that he considered "the book (which is the result of seven years study on this subject) as my life-work contribution to the archives of American history." In looking for a publisher Abernethy showed his manuscript to Arthur Brisbane "and asked him to induce Hearst to publish it for me. Brisbane, without reading it, said that Hearst would buy the manuscript IF I WOULD PERMIT HIM TO DESTROY IT. His idea was that a criticism of Washington (which the book was not) was an attack on patriotism." It was brought out by Neale Publishing Company in 1906. Among his other "53 Books," some of them pamphlets, were *The Jew a Negro*, *Crazy Americans*, and *A Royal Southern Family*.

Passing from such literary dilettantism, Abernethy entered the religious field. He wrote *Center-Shots at Sin* (294 pages, 1918), *Twenty-Five Best Sermons* (367 pages, 1920), *The Apostles' Creed* (104 pages,

1925), and *Christian's Treasure Island* (173 pages, 1927). These books were brought about by his change in occupation as well as his abandonment of the Methodist Church. Resorting again to his "Who's Zoo," "preached four years in New York when I became skeptical of Yankees having a soul and accepted pastorate of most historic church in Cincinnati, where I wrote the Senior Quarterly and Senior Class Magazine Sunday School lessons for Standard Series, and published a number of books, some so-so and others even less so." For a time he was pastor of the Christian Church in Asheville—"Am an honorary Elder for Life in the Disciples of Christ Church, and hope to go to heaven, but am in no rush to go." His sermons and religious books were acclaimed far and wide by newspapers and prominent leaders in church and politics. William Jennings Bryan said that Abernethy was "a man of power as well as of faith" and that his sermons were "well worth hearing."

Arthur Talmage's pen never ran out of ink. Apart from his books and pamphlets, he wrote for the local newspapers, for *Collier's Weekly*, and for a time he became associated with R. Don Law's unique paper called the *Yellow Jacket*, at Moravian Falls. He reveled in extravaganza, writing in a style which knew no bounds in words or expressions. He made up such words and expressions as "gabbyjack," "fuzzywumps," and "Jeremiah Saddlebags." In 1910 when Halley's Comet was uppermost in people's consciences and in the sky, he wrote an extravaganza for the *Hickory Times-Mercury*, in which he predicted that the tail of the comet would swish against the earth, dropping 17,000 "guyacotuses" and 1,000,000 "whangdoodles." These were terrible monsters which gulped down whole families.

In his unpredictable career, he associated with the high and the low. He traveled round the world; was dined by King Leopold II of Belgium who gave him citations for having upheld the King in his African Congo troubles; associated with Teddy Roosevelt and other presidents of the United States; and ate meals with the Mikado of Japan and with President Porfirio Diaz of Mexico. In 1899, writing from Philadelphia, where he spent much time, he sought to enlist in the hills of Western North Carolina 1,000 volunteers to be known as "Abernethy's Immortals." These he intended to lead to the Philippines, capture Aguinaldo, and put an immediate stop to the war going on there. He began a marital career in 1896 which resulted over the years in the collection of an unknown number of wives—hostile rumors insisting that at one stage he had more than one at the same time. In his latter years he settled in Rutherford College, where he had begun this amazing career, respected and honored by his election

as mayor of the village, and given the accolade by the *Charlotte Observer*, "Sage of Rutherford College." As a stunt he one time ran for Congress. He died on May 15, 1956, nearly 84 years old.

From the time Coulter moved to Connelly Springs he knew Arthur Talmage Abernethy and had pleasant dealings and associations with him. Likewise he had business dealings with other members of the Abernethy family; and his association with the college itself began when he attended commencement exercises while he was still living in the "Nation," and probably before. When the college under its new regime began to prosper in the early 1900's, at least six of Coulter's eight children attended this school, which was now only a preparatory school, though it was still officially called Rutherford College. A little later it was elevated into a junior college. President Weaver was succeeded in 1903 by A. C. Reynolds (the head was soon given the title of President instead of Principal). Outstanding teachers during the time the Coulter children attended were A. C. Reynolds, Irving B. McKay, and W. W. Peele. In 1908 Peele was also President. Later he joined the Methodist ministry and ultimately became a Bishop in the Church.

During the first decade and a half of the twentieth century the school and the town grew rapidly. With the influx of girls under the new regime, in 1901 a literary society was organized for them, called the Victorian. In 1908 there was dedicated a library building, given by Andrew Carnegie. It was Arthur Talmage Abernethy who prevailed on the canny old Scotchman to donate this building. Federal Judge Jeter C. Pritchard delivered the dedicatory address. Within a few years thirty-two new families had moved into town, and seventeen new residences had been constructed. Even industrialism slipped into this educational community in 1906, when the Belwood Shoe Company set up a factory, which turned out from twenty-five to thirty pairs of shoes a day.

Coulter's interest in Rutherford College did not end with the last of his children's education there. It was always an occasion to attend the commencement exercises, and frequently he served as one of the judges in the debates of the literary societies—especially of the Newtonian Society, which all of his boys had joined.

The college campus soon had become so cramped by residences edging closer that it was decided to move the location to a spot about half way between the village and Connelly Springs where the institution could expand. In the furtherance of this movement, in 1912 Coulter gave the Trustees of Rutherford College "in consideration of the love we have for the cause of Christian education and a desire



to promote the same" 22½ acres of land, "To have and to hold the said lands and premises to them, [the] parties of the second part, their successors in office, to their only use and behoof, but upon the express condition that the said premises shall be used exclusively for college purposes and not to be sold or conveyed except [to] some Orthodox Protestant Denomination." To this gift an addition was made by Dr. T. V. Goode, and there was built a new college edifice and a dormitory for boys. Coulter was elected a Trustee and later he was given a certificate adding him to the "Friends of Rutherford College." The school paper noted, "There is no one in this section of the state with greater interest in the progress and growth of Rutherford College than Mr. J. E. Coulter, veteran member of the Burke County Board of Education," adding, "His chief interest outside his family is the schools of Burke County."

Time passed on, and in its course the Methodist Church decided that it was trying to support too many junior colleges, and so it was decided in 1933 to combine Rutherford College with Brevard Institute and Weaver College. After two years of futile efforts of Burke County to operate the school the doors of Rutherford College were now closed forever and the land which Coulter had given to the Trustees of Rutherford College to "be used exclusively for college purposes," was transferred to a hospital. There is no record that Coulter objected to this violation of his deed of gift.

West of Connelly Springs about three miles on the railway was Valdese. This settlement grew up the year after Coulter moved to Connelly Springs. Its origin goes back to Italy, to the high valleys of the Cottian Alps, southwest of Turin, in the Province of Piedemonte, near the French border. In this region, about 22 miles long and 16 wide, cut across by the headwaters of the Po River, lived about 22,000 Waldenses or Waldensians as they were to be generally called in America. They were the descendants of the followers of Peter Waldo of the twelfth century. Some of these valleys came to such a sharp point as to provide little land for cultivation--hardly a sixth of all this region could be cultivated. Racked with poverty, some of these people had been migrating to other parts of the world by the 1850's, considerable numbers going to South America. By the early 1890's some had moved to Utah, Missouri, and to Texas; but the most important Waldensian colony in the United States came to Burke County, North Carolina and founded and developed the town of Valdese.

In March, 1893 two emissaries from "Des Valleees Des Alpes Cottiennes" arrived in the United States and were met by Marvin

F. Scaife, a capitalist of Pittsburgh and of Morganton, who on a trip to Italy had become interested in the Waldensians and who had developed the Morganton Land and Improvement Company, the owner of much land in Burke and thereabouts. After being shown various locations they chose the Valdese region and bargained for 10,000 acres, at the price of \$25,000. Seventeen families, numbering 29 souls (mostly from the high valley of Prali), boarded the Holland-American *Zaandam* in May, 1893, crowded with 1,200 steerage passengers and landed in New York on the 26th. They were greeted by Scaife, who arranged for their transportation to their "land of promise."

The Old Dominion Steamship Company gave them reduced fare to West Point, Virginia, and there they boarded the cars of the Richmond and Danville Railroad Company, which gave them passage free of charge. They arrived in Valdese on May 29th. These were the first of several groups and individual families from Italy and other places who came to make the town of Valdese. The largest group to come arrived in November of 1893, consisting of 178.

These people were Protestants, belonging to the Waldensian Church, but soon after reaching Valdese they became a part of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Their pastor, who came with the first group, was the Reverend C. A. Tron. He was especially valuable to the group, for he spoke English fairly well, whereas none of the others spoke English at all. Their language was French with important Italian influences—a sort of mixture of both languages. Their family names gave some indication of their linguistic background: Guigou, Giraud, Pons, Refour, Tron, Martinat, Grill, Griset (Grisette), Jacumin, Léger, Meytre, Micol, Pascal, Peyronel, Ribet, Salvageot, Vinay, Bounous, Clot, Garrou, Ghigo, Perrou, Rostan, Salvaggio, Soulier, Verreaut, and so on.

Their lot was hard for the first few years. Their land was not very fertile—in fact it was charged that they had been set down "on the bleak scrub pine hills of nowhere." It was rumored that the whole group was about to leave. They had at first organized themselves under the name of the Valdese Corporation, a sort of communal arrangement, whose duty it was to provide for the economic development of the community. When they soon found that they were unable to pay the \$25,000 for the 10,000 acres of land, the land company allowed them to reduce their holdings to 5,000. The people of Morganton and elsewhere were very helpful and considerate in every way possible, and people generally tried to make these "strange people in a strange land" feel at home. An old retired ship captain, Murdoch W. Wiley,

who was spending the winter and spring of 1893-1894 at the Connelly Springs Hotel, for exercise and curiosity used to walk up the railway track frequently to see the Waldensians.

Coulter soon had dealings with them, selling them lumber for their houses, fertilizers for their crops, and much merchandise from his store, which the Waldensians used as a sort of wholesale supply house for their company store in Valdese. This store for a time was run by Hippolyte Salvageot, who bought from Coulter sacks of coffee, barrels of sugar, and much salt, smoking tobacco (most of the Waldensians were great pipe smokers), meat, rice, peas, kerosene oil, and much else to supply the needs and wants of his customers. Salvageot later became postmaster and depot agent at Valdese and remained a fast friend and customer of Coulter's as long as he lived. Salvageot was the first Waldensian to become a United States citizen. He spoke excellent English, having learned the language, it was said, from an English general who had made Salvageot his aide. He had lived in England and France from 1861 to 1877. He came to Valdese in November, 1893 and died there in 1926.

John Meier was a Swiss, born in the mountains across from Italy, who was superintendent of a hosiery mill in Charlotte when the Waldensians settled in Valdese. Dr. Matteo Prochet, important in the Waldensian Church in Italy and twice knighted by King Humbert, was on a visit to Valdese in 1894 and sensing the need of some industry for these people, induced Meier to come to Valdese and set up a hosiery mill. Meier was given the use of an old barn to house his machinery and at the end of five years the building and lot were to be deeded to him. He was to pay good wages and hire only Waldensians.

Meier came, set up the mill, and was given a prominent place in the affairs of the community, succeeding Salvageot as manager of the company store. The Valdese Hosiery Mill now advertised itself as "Manufacturers of Misses' Rib Cut Hose and Gents' Half Hose." He immediately began buying from Coulter lumber and merchandise, running up a large debt. Soon he was prospering neither with his mill nor with the Waldensians. He was accused of bringing in old second-hand machinery and of paying low wages. At first threatening to transfer his mill to Hickory, he soon moved it to Newton, and not long thereafter he was in South Carolina trying to make a go of the hosiery business, and promising to pay Coulter what he owed him. In 1897 he was running a mill in Manning, and in acknowledging a polite reminder of this debt, Meier noted, "Trusting you wont claim the earth and leaving a few inches for me and the Democratic party to stand on. . . ." In 1899, from Blackville, he wrote Coulter that he



would like to be back in Valdese, and added "There is money in the hosiery business but it takes money to get started." Meier and the Coulter debt finally disappeared in the broad reaches of Texas.

Though Meier could be written off by Coulter as a liability he was not so with the Waldensians, for however much they might have disliked him, he had planted an important idea in the minds of Waldensian leaders—especially the Garrou brothers, who had learned the hosiery business under Meier. The Garrous began anew the manufacture of hosiery in Valdese, which added to by others, brought growth, wealth, and fame to the village.

Coulter had business dealings with many of the Waldensians and made slight investments in some of their enterprises. He sold much building material to the Reverend Barth. Soulier, pastor of the Waldensian congregation from 1894 to 1900, who was supervising the building of their church structure. Peter Tron (April 21, 1854-June 19, 1925), the Garrous, Francis Ghigo, and the Refours (John, Sr., John, Jr., and Frank) were good friends of Coulter's. With these and others he had pleasant business relations including (to mention a few): Peter E. Micol (August 11, 1853-January 24, 1930), Jaubert Micol, Fred Meytre, John Henry Pascal (June 14, 1861-June 23, 1954), Julius Pascal (1881-1944), Philip Pascal (April 7, 1861-November 5, 1932), Albert Pons (November 10, 1857-April 7, 1940), John H. Pons (1863-1940), John Jacumin, Felix Bounous, Fred Peyronel, and Henry Vinay.

The Waldensians were superb rock masons. With their trowels and rock hammers they could make a beautiful smooth wall, using the roughest unhewn rocks—an excellent example of their work being the Waldensian church structure. Coulter used them occasionally in building walls on his farms. A fame more widely spread came from the excellent wine they made. This skill they brought from "the old country"; and the rocky hills around Valdese offered no problem in setting out their vineyards, in comparison with what they had conquered on the steep slopes of the valleys of the Alps. Some of the prohibitionists frowned on these Waldensian winemakers and their wines. To curry favor with the Rutherford College authorities, who strictly forbade their students to drink Valdese wine (so easily obtained), the Waldensians agreed to refuse all sales to the students. Students tried to disguise themselves, arguing that they had come "from across the mountains"; but as they had often hired Lank Estes' mule to ride, the Waldensians had become familiar with the animal, and their answer became celebrated: "No wine, no wine—Estes' mule."

Westward up the railway about seven miles beyond Valdese lay

Morganton, the county seat of law and government. As already mentioned, Morganton had got started about Revolutionary War times and was incorporated the year the Treaty of Independence was signed with the British—1783. Naturally Coulter became much more closely identified with Morganton than with Hickory and Newton, towns in Catawba County, where practically all of his and his wife's kindred lived. Deeds and mortgages must be recorded in the courthouse in Morganton and actions in court had to be brought there; and politics was made up there, too. So Coulter made frequent trips to Morganton, especially so after he became a member of the County Board of Education; and he came to know most all the people of much importance in the town. The county newspaper was published there—sometimes more than one. On November 29, 1901 the *Burke County News* and the *Morganton Herald* consolidated into *The News-Herald*. A few years later the *Morganton Messenger* began publication, but did not last very long. T. G. Cobb became editor and owner of the *News-Herald*, and after his death, his daughter Beatrice Cobb, ran the paper until her death in 1959. Both were long-time friends of Coulter.

A Morganton "celebrity" whom Coulter never knew but about whom he heard much was Sally Michael and her smoking pipes. She did not live "exactly" in Morganton but she visited the town constantly until her death in 1870, peddling her pipes, at 25¢ a dozen. Her home was far in the recesses of the South Mountains, in Kaylor's Gap, between Kaylor's Knob and Burkmont. She made her pipes of gritless clay which she got from the banks of Silver Creek. They absorbed nicotine, could be burned out, were hard to break, and would last a lifetime and more. A person in Morganton in 1892 had one which he had been smoking for 28 years. The Sally Michael pipe was said to be "the finest clay pipe made in America" and it seems that these pipes became a favorite of Confederate soldiers. After Sally's death a daughter made the pipes until her death; and in 1947 the pipes were still being made, now by a grandson of Sally's.

In the little tobacco kingdom of Morganton and regions beyond, the name Sally Michael stood at the top. So why should there not be "Sally Michael" tobacco to be smoked in Sally Michael pipes or in any other pipes? Indeed, in 1891 (or possibly before) there was organized the Sally Michael Tobacco Company, which began turning out "a fine brand of smoking tobacco," destined to be one of the most popular brands in the state—so the company predicted. Before the end of the year, J. C. and Manly McDowell (famed as a Burke County sheriff) bought the company and planned to put new machinery in



the factory and to engage on an extensive advertising campaign: "The packages will be adorned with handsome lithographed labels representing the original Sally Michael, smoking one of her famous pipes filled with Burke County golden leaf." Within a year or two the tobacco was being heralded as a favorite of a "German count," who was importing it into the Kaiser's empire for enjoying it in his own pipe and presenting it to some of his friends. When last heard of, the company was being run by Ralph and Fred Laxton.

Probably the most beloved man of his day and generation was Charles Finley McKesson ("Charlie"), who always referred to Coulter as "My good friend," with whom Coulter had business dealings to the extent at least of having bought a calf from him. Charlie was born in the famous Quaker Meadows community above Morganton, on March 14, 1849. In 1865 he entered the University of North Carolina and remained three years. The next year he transferred to the University of Virginia, where he received the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1869. He was a journalist, a lecturer, a United States Commissioner, a clerk in governmental service in Washington, and an orator par excellence. He could display his emotions and capture the emotions of his hearers in whatever cause he was advocating—and sometimes in the prohibition campaign of 1908 to free North Carolina from "King Alcohol," he could cry like a baby in depicting his reform from his "wild days." He had been rescued by Evangelist W. P. Fife in 1891 and for a time he became a sort of evangelist himself. One of his lectures was "The Poets and Poetry of the Bible," but his most famous was "Paul at Athens." There were few schools, churches, colleges, and clubs in Western North Carolina which did not invite him to give this famous lecture. Charlie drifted off into the Fusionist-Republican camps in 1898, which brought him Republican plums, but when he died in 1918, if he had not returned to the Democracy, he was loved as much as if he had.

Another person who probably did not consider himself a Morgantonian, but who was well known there and was a friend of Coulter's, was Colonel Marcellus E. Thornton. He was born in Georgia but became a sort of cosmopolite within bounds, a speculator in lands, and a dreamer of great things to be done. He seems first to have become associated with the Morganton community by developing a place a few miles above the town which was called Bridgewater, in the midst of a great tract of his land. Soon he became interested in coal mining in southeastern Kentucky near a small village called Kensee, where he became postmaster. In 1892 he sold a half interest in his \$500,000 coal mine there, but continued in the presidency of



a \$2,000,000 coal company nearby at Jellico Creek. At this time he was preparing to return to start "building up Bridgewater." He later became editor of the *Press and Carolinian*, a Hickory newspaper, and developed business interests there.

For more than a quarter century Tom Loudermilk was Morganton's weather prophet, whose predictions were regularly published in the county newspaper and eagerly read by the Coulter family (with some reservations as to their reliability) and by almost everybody else. These weather predictions were religiously relied upon by some people. In 1891 the editor of the *Herald* humorously charged that Loudermilk had been responsible for the siege of bad weather that had been going on. Loudermilk denied the charges, but the editor insisted that Tom was "generally supposed to approve of it" and that it was "very certain that we had no such weather before he went into the prophesying business." A 10-inch snow fell in Burke in March of 1894. When Loudermilk sent in his predictions, the editor could not make out whether Tom had predicted eight or nine snows for the rest of the year. The editor inferred that Tom "and the groundhog are still in the ring and that it is their joint opinion that we will have eight or nine more snows."

Another "character" of the Morganton vicinity, who lived out four miles to the northwest was Uncle Jimmy Winters, 79 years old in 1910, who had been walking to town for the past 50 years, selling his baskets, made of whiteoak splits. It would be a safe guess that Coulter bought a few of them.

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, there were few people in Burke County who had not seen or heard of J. Arthur Wainwright, a tall, ruddy-faced Yankee, with a sandy beard and head of hair, together with a few eccentricities. He had come to the mountain region south of Morganton in search of gold, but instead had found a mountain maid whom he liked better than the shining metal. Captivated by the maid and by the mountains, too, he decided to stay. At one time he had practiced law in Northampton, Massachusetts, and had become a friend of Calvin Coolidge. Also he had acquaintances among several other prominent men of the North. He made a large collection of postage stamps and autographs. When the Farmers' Union developed in North Carolina, Wainwright became important in that movement, and it was in that connection that Coulter became associated with J. Arthur Wainwright.

Coulter himself never caught the gold fever in any form, but in some of his Morganton dealings, he did come into possession of one of the famous "Bechtler dollars," made of gold. Christopher Bechtler

was a German assayer, who set up a mint in Rutherfordton, about 30 miles south of Morganton, and began coining in 1834 gold dollars. He coined also \$2.50 and \$5.00 gold pieces. They later came to be prized possessions, and Coulter prized his coin highly. But carelessly one time letting it get mixed with his pocket coins, he gave it away in change as a one-cent piece. He was never able to recover the coin or to find out to whom he had given it; but many times thereafter he regretted losing it.

## CHAPTER XIII

### POLITICS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

C OULTER became interested in politics when as a lad he heard his father and neighbors talk about Radical rascalities during the Reconstruction period; and finally when President Rutherford B. Hayes withdrew Federal occupying troops from the South in 1877, Coulter was old enough to be keeping up with the times, for he was then 16 years old. As has already appeared he became active in politics when he moved to the "Nation."

His moving to Connelly Springs from Catawba County, the "Banner Democratic County of the State," was a welcome addition to the Burke Democracy and was regretted by the Catawba Democracy. Burke needed support for her Democracy, for there was a strong Republican element in the county. Republicans soon learned that politically he neither slept nor slumbered. A squib in the *Morganton News-Herald* in 1903 said that when John Ellis Coulter and John Houk came to town, "They sit together on the street, one scribbling, the other watching in silent approval, eyed with an intense interest by the Republican lights, for these two 'untterrified' have been a source of uneasiness to the enemy so long they are not sure what's going to happen, even in an off year, when Ellis and John are seen together."

Politics began at the door-step, or at the grass roots, as the idea was later expressed. So it was, then, Coulter's interest and activities began with the precinct, and extended on up through the township, the county, the Congressional district, the state, and to the nation. In 1898 he was chairman of the Lovelady Township Democratic Convention, which met at Valdese. He was elected a member of the Executive Committee and sent as one of four delegates to the County Convention in Morganton. There he played a prominent part, being



elected to various committees, including the County Executive Committee. Also he was sent as a delegate to the State Democratic Convention in Raleigh. On his return he gave "quite a graphic account" of the activities of that convention. For years he was a member of the Lovelady Township Executive Committee, and frequently chairman. Generally he was on important county committees and often a delegate to various conventions. In 1916 he was chairman of the Lovelady committee with these members on the committee: J. D. Cassels, A. L. Lefevers, and B. L. Lunsford from Rutherford College; Francis Garrou and J. M. Brinkley from Valdese; and J. C. McGalliard and H. C. Goode from Connelly Springs. In 1900 he was elected permanent chairman of the County Convention, meeting in Morganton. Since the Negro had cast his shadow over politics in the Fusion times of the late 1890's, this convention determined to form "White Supremacy" clubs; but a little later it was decided to broaden the name and activities of such clubs and in the light of the national campaign to rename them "Bryan and Stephenson" clubs—William J. Bryan and Adlai E. Stephenson (1835-1914) being the Democratic nominees for president and vice president, respectively. This year Coulter was on the County Board of Elections and was made secretary. Among the duties of this Board were the appointment of registrars and judges of elections in the various precincts and fixing the size and color of the ballots.

Now and then he served as Tax Assessor of Lovelady Township and in 1912 he was being prominently mentioned as the Democratic candidate for the state legislature; but he had no ambition for public office and in this instance as in others he refused to let his name come up for nomination.

Coulter's political activities were equally evident in state nominations and elections; and often his support was solicited. In 1924 Robert R. Reynolds of Asheville in his campaign for nomination to the lieutenant governorship hoped that Coulter would help swing Burke County his way. In 1908 Coulter attended the Democratic State Convention in Charlotte and voted to nominate William W. Kitchin for governor. T. W. Bickett was Coulter's choice for governor in 1916, and when Bickett spoke in Morganton, Coulter introduced him. Bickett wrote him, "You did nobly and I shall not forget it. Your introduction of me was an inspiration all through the campaign." In 1920 Coulter was a Cameron Morrison supporter. Morrison wrote him thanking him for "all the splendid work you did for me in the recent fight. I am very proud of my vote in your section, and I hope you will thank as many of my friends for me as you can."

Coulter used all legitimate ways to bring in the votes, whether it was transporting good Democrats to the polls in his car—as in 1928 when he “Brought in last two votes”—or using arguments on Republicans and lukewarm Democrats. One of his former workmen asked him for help to get a job with a Mr. Mull, stating that he would have written directly to Mull but “didnt now his nitchels [initials].” He added that if Coulter would help him get the job, “I will pay you for your truble and might vote in the next Election what you call right.”

In the national picture, as often as William Jennings Bryan ran for the presidency Coulter supported him, naming one of his children Bryan, just before the election in 1896. During this campaign Bryan spoke in Hickory. Coulter was on a special committee for Lovelady Township to see that the news was spread—“See that it is known on every hearthstone.” Coulter, no less than Bryan, was a great believer in the free coinage of silver as the remedy for most of the country’s ills. One of his business correspondents banteringly wrote him, “How is your free silver—the Populists etc.?” A Hickory friend sent him “a button marked 16 to 1 with candidates of which I trust you approve, and will wear during the coming campaign.” Coulter was an enthusiastic Woodrow Wilson supporter in 1912, coming out early for his nomination. He was in charge of the “Lovelady-for-Wilson” activities in his township. In 1928 he was one of the unterrified Democrats who voted for Alfred E. Smith, and he used his car all day to bring in the voters; but Burke as well as the whole state went Republican.

Coulter was a long-time supporter of the two North Carolina Senators, F. M. Simmons and Lee S. Overman. He wrote them frequently commending them for their positions on national issues—seldom disagreeing. In 1914 he wrote to Senator Overman his strong approval of a bill the Senator had introduced “providing for the collection and distribution among Confederate soldiers of the \$65,000,000 of tax money illegally collected from the people of the South.” In asking for his continued support Overman wrote Coulter in 1907, “I write to you as one of the foremost Democrats of Burke, one who has shown unselfish interest in the welfare of the party, to enlist your support and influence in behalf of my endorsement and re-election, provided you think I have been true to the trust imposed upon me by the party of the State.”

Coulter supported Simmons against Julian S. Carr in 1900; and in 1912 he preferred Simmons to Walter Clark and W. W. Kitchin, who were seeking the nomination. And although Coulter had been much closer personally to Simmons than to Overman, he finally fell out



with Simmons over the tariff and other issues, and in 1928 he called Simmons the "Arch Traitor to his State."

Among the issues which were of both state and national importance, toward which Coulter took a prominent public attitude were woman suffrage and prohibition. He was in favor of both, but almost emotionally so on prohibition. The prohibition issue was uppermost in North Carolina politics in 1908. Coulter circulated a prohibition petition around Connelly Springs and got 61 signatures, his name heading the list. The Anti-Saloon League, of which he was a member, held a mass meeting in Morganton, at which he was called to the chair. Charlie McKesson made an impassioned speech in which he told how liquor had got him down in one stage of his life, and how he had reformed. The meeting organized every township in the county by appointing for each a vice president and two committeemen. Coulter was the vice president for Lovelady; J. D. Cassels and A. L. Lefevers were the two committeemen.

In this campaign Coulter did more than buttonhole individuals. For a year or two previously he had been attending prohibition meetings and writing for newspapers arguments against liquor. Ella Wheeler Wilcox's poem against strong drink was coming into play. The poem began:

There sat two glasses, filled to the brim,  
On a rich man's table, rim to rim,  
One was ruddy and red as blood  
And one was clear as the crystal flood.

Though Coulter was no orator and never attempted oratorical flourishes, he stuck to facts and made convincing speeches. One of his frequent quotations was "Wine is a mocker. Strong drink is raging." He would say "Whiskey wont let you alone even if you do let it alone." It increased crimes and taxes and broke up homes. "Nobody wants a drunkard's service—not even the saloon man." "I don't drink, yet it has mocked me & burdened me with tax." Some people say you "Cant legislate sobriety & Christianity by law; neither can you legislate honesty, etc." He made a speech in Startown, the old community of Catawba County where he was born and grew up, addressing his audience "Ladies and Gentlemen, Sons and Daughters of Catawba County, my old Schoolmates, my Neighbors, and my Kinsmen." So effective was that speech that one of his hearers in complimenting him, said that he knew one man, a drunkard, who was converted by it. More than a half century afterwards a man who as a boy had heard the speech, remembered this passage in it: "I finally could not resist



the desire to come & am here—a Crank so called but a Crank is not the worst thing, as Cranks turn things. . . .”

The election was held in May and North Carolina voted dry, the first Southern state to adopt prohibition by a popular vote. The majority in Burke was 693. Also Lovelady Township voted dry, the tally being: 53 wet, 162 dry. Eternal vigilance being the price of victory, the Anti-Saloon League continued as an active organization. In 1922 Coulter subscribed aid for it to the amount of \$6.00 a year for five years. The need for continuing the campaign for prohibition was suggested in a letter from Professor Zeb Vance Babbit, “Phrenologist, Palmist, and Mind Reader,” ordering a pig from Coulter: “I am a sort of jack leg lawyer, and I am very busy getting people out of trouble who have broke the Democratic prohibition law.”

Coulter was not entirely unknown to the whiskey distillers and wholesale liquor dealers in various parts of the nation, since he had for some years past been buying their empty barrels in which to store his grain—especially peas. Also he had bought corn from R. H. Dorn, “Dealer in Hops and Malt and Distillers Agent.” One businessman from whom Coulter bought empty barrels advertised himself as “Distiller, Wholesale Liquor Dealer and Rectifier. I only deal in PURE NORTH CAROLINA WHISKIES and BRANDY, made by open furnace heat, being the best process known for Purity and Flavor. I manufacture the celebrated ‘LAUREL VALLEY OLD CORN’ and RYE WHISKIES.” Other famous brands of whiskey made in North Carolina before prohibition were: “Old Watauga,” “Mountain Queen,” “Roaring River,” “Turkey Mountain,” and “Pride of North Carolina.”

Before prohibition (“B. P.” facetiously abbreviated) a Virginia distiller had offered Coulter whiskey at \$1.25 a gallon; and during the hot campaign of 1908 a Louisville, Kentucky distiller had Coulter on its list to receive “advertising literature,” informing all that whiskey, especially “Four Roses” “means peace, happiness and length of days for you.” It quoted William E. Gladstone as having said on the receipt of a consignment of this brand: “The best men in the world and the worst drink whiskey,” and the Louisville distiller said Gladstone might well have added “that the best men drink the best whiskey and the worst men the worst.”

All of this whiskey literature Coulter might have considered insulting, but probably he paid no attention to it. But in 1909, when North Carolina was dry, attention was called to a new problem when such whiskey advertisements as the following were being sent

out by an Ohio liquor company to North Carolinians: Four quarts of "Private Stock" for \$3.00 express paid or eight full quarts of "Old Rock and Rye" for only \$5.00. E. Yates Webb, Coulter's Congressman and a close friend, probably needed no prodding to get a law passed which would put a stop to this inter-state shipment of liquor into a dry state. At least in 1913 the Webb-Kenyon law was passed which forbade this flourishing business.

Throughout his lifetime Coulter subscribed for more than two dozen newspapers—political, religious, agricultural, literary—and some simply for the news and others for light entertainment. In the 1890's he subscribed for the *New York World* for its pure Democracy and he induced many of his friends to take this paper; and for the same reason he took the *National Watchman* published in Washington and the *Silver Knight-Watchman*, published in the same place; but for downright loyalty to Bryan and what he stood for, Coulter for years took *The Commoner*. For politics and county news he subscribed for the *News-Herald* from the time the paper was so called and before that time he took the two which made it up; and for some years he had the paper sent to all his children, scattered from Washington, D. C. to Texas and Peru. He cut his teeth on the *Newton Enterprise* and for the news from his old home Catawba County he took this paper and the *Catawba County News* (a rival paper in Newton) and when they combined into the *Catawba News-Enterprise*, he continued to take this paper into his old age. Finally when he was in his middle seventies he paid for only three months more, intimating that he would then let it stop, "as I am getting more papers and magazines than I can read." He added, "As I have taken the papers so long I do hate to give it up, and I will especially miss your editorials, but I am not far from the time that I will cancel all earthly ties." (This was a familiar chord Coulter had been striking on occasion since he was forty. He was yet to live ten years). This so touched the editor's heart that he sent his compliments and made Coulter a present of a year's subscription. Also Coulter took the *Hickory Democrat* for a time, but it did not become a favorite like the Newton papers.

For general state news he early began taking the *Raleigh News and Observer*, Josephus Daniels' paper, and in 1895 he named a son Daniels. He especially wanted this paper during the sittings of the legislature. Also he took the *North Carolinian*, another Daniels paper, and the *Raleigh Farmer and Mechanic*. He switched around some in taking papers for state news—the *Charlotte Observer*, the *Asheville Citizen*, the *Greensboro Daily News*, the *Winston-Salem Journal*, and for news of Tennessee, the *Knoxville Sentinel*. For some years he

took the *Atlanta Constitution* for a little broader news coverage. *Our Church Paper*, a Lutheran paper, was long a visitor in his home as well as the *Lutheran Witness* and the *Catawba Lutheran*. To serve his agricultural interests he subscribed for the *Practical Farmer* (Philadelphia), the *Progressive Farmer*, and the *Southern Ruralist* (Atlanta). For sensationalism nothing equalled W. D. Boyce's *Chicago Ledger* and *Saturday Blade*. During the last decade or two of his life he took the *Pathfinder* and the *Hickory Daily Record* for steady and consistent reading.

*The Grit* (Williamsport, Pa.) was a paper that appealed to many people around Connelly Springs, some of them probably reading no other paper. Coulter for years acted as a sort of agent for this paper, receiving it in bundles which he dispensed from his office. Finally in 1938 he gave up this little visitor which had been bringing many other visitors to his office. *The Grit* publishers expressed their sorrow in his quitting: "You have been with us for a long time and it certainly has been splendid the way you have conducted the work." They made him a present of a free copy for the next six months.

As an officer of the law, Coulter served in two capacities: Notary Public and Justice of the Peace. To the position of Notary Public he was appointed by the governor for terms of two years. He held this commission for most of his adult life. The duties of a Notary Public were to certify powers of attorney, mortgages, deeds, and other instruments of writing, to take depositions and affidavits, and to administer oaths.

The duties of a Justice of the Peace were much more onerous and engaging. Coulter first became a Justice of the Peace in 1896 and his last election was for a six-year term in 1941, and although he lived out this term he was inactive. This last election (it was done by the legislature) was more of an honor than a call to active service, for Coulter had ceased to perform the duties of the position by 1938.

In preparing for the duties of this office Coulter secured two books on the subject: *North Carolina Hand Book: A Guide for Justices of the Peace, Clerks, Sheriffs, Registers, Coroners, Constables, and other County Officers; Including the Laws, Forms and Precedents*. This book was written "By a Member of the Raleigh Bar" and was published in 1878. The other book was written by Robert W. Winston and was entitled *Talks about Law wherein such Legal Principles are Treated in a Manner within the Reach of the Average Mind*. Coulter wrote in his copy that he had bought the book on September 30, 1897. Often he sought information on certain points that came up in his Justice of the Peace work, from lawyers: Gus Self of Hickory,



and John M. Mull, P. W. Patton, A. C. Avery, Sr., J. F. Spainhour, and S. J. Ervin, Sr., of Morganton.

The jurisdiction of a Justice of the Peace extended to both civil and criminal cases. In civil cases he could not try a suit involving the title to real estate; nor suits where the sum demanded was more than \$200. In criminal cases he could not levy a fine of more than \$50.00 nor more than 30 days in jail—and he could not use both punishments in the same case. His jurisdiction extended to all assault and battery cases where no deadly weapons were used and no serious damage done. Also a Justice of the Peace might perform marriages, issue summonses and warrants for arrest, and engage in other small services, such as deputizing any citizen to serve warrants. Now and then cases which might begin in a Justice of the Peace Court would bring out facts making it necessary to send them up to the Superior Court for trial. All fines were sent to the Clerk of the Superior Court who turned them over to the Board of Education. If any person had good reason to believe that he could not get a fair trial under a certain Justice of the Peace he could have the case removed to another Justice. But when an attempt was made to have a case removed from Coulter's court when he was acting in the capacity of Mayor of Connelly Springs, it was shown that such removal was not permissible. If in some important or complicated case a Justice of the Peace should like aid, he could call in another Justice to sit with him; but the decision must be entirely in the hands of the original Justice. The multiplicity of legal blanks and forms necessary for all contingencies sometimes left a Justice of the Peace unsupplied; and in such an instance, he would borrow from another Justice. Coulter kept large packs of all these forms; he had Harrell's Printing House of Weldon to print them for him.

Coulter never attempted to develop the marrying business; but he was always ready to perform the ceremony, which sometimes took place in the parlor of his home. He never made a charge, but, of course, would accept a fee if offered. In one instance he was given a "free will offering" of 5¢, which was seriously made and which he seriously accepted.

Civil cases which Coulter tried generally related to the collection of board bills, physicians' bills, store accounts, and payment for goods sent on consignment.

Most of the cases which came before Coulter were criminal. There was a seduction case; abandonment (bound over to Superior Court under \$200 bond); wife beating (\$250 peace bond for 3 years); adultery (bound over to Superior Court); bastardy cases (\$200 to the

woman and \$10.00 to the state; \$40.00 to the woman and \$1.00 to the state; \$50.00 to the woman; and so on, varying with the circumstances).

For disturbing public worship at Shady Grove Church, Coulter placed the disturber under a \$100 bond and bound him over to the Superior Court. In another case he fined two disturbers of public worship a total of \$20.00. Two people broke into Friendship Methodist Church; Coulter fined one \$5.00—the other fled the state. Coulter fined two people \$10.00 each for breaking into a schoolhouse, making obscene drawings on the blackboard, and hiding the school bell. Three boys decided to annoy guests at the Connelly Springs Hotel by "loud cursing, swearing, shooting & hollowing." He fined each \$5.00. A person who disturbed a Baptist baptising was bound over to the Superior Court.

Now and then liquor cases came before Coulter. A bootlegger was bound over to the Superior Court after the confiscation of eight gallons of "white lightning" and a horse and buggy. Another was bound over under a \$200 bond. For a drunken disturbance Coulter fined a person \$3.00 and costs. For making liquor another was bound over under a \$400 bond.

Those who were cruel to animals got short shrift in Coulter's court. A person who ran "his mules, cursed & swore & by his boisterous & unbecoming conduct became a nuisance" was fined \$5.00 and costs, and on his refusal to pay, was sent to jail where he remained ten days until he decided to change his mind. For shooting and killing a hound dog another person was fined \$2.00 and costs of \$5.20. A person who did not know about the Audubon Law, shot and killed a brown thrasher. Coulter gave him the minimum fine of \$1.00.

The railroad passing through Connelly Springs was not above the even justice of the law. Nat Reid in charge of a train that blocked the road crossing for 20 minutes was fined 1¢ and costs of \$2.10. Coulter here tempered justice with mercy, for a drawhead had broken on one of the cars and while it was being fixed the train could not move. Another trainman was fined \$5.00 and costs of \$1.25 for blocking a crossing; Coulter gave him a larger fine because of his insulting language to George A. Hauss. Even-handed justice was also a protector of the railroad. A person who broke into a railroad box-car and stole "several cans of salmonds" was, in the absence of making bond, sent to jail to await trial in the Superior Court. "Swinging trains" was strictly against the peace and dignity of Connelly Springs, and to prove it Coulter fined two boys \$1.00 each and costs.

More fighting cases than any other variety came before Coulter's court. Two friends slightly inebriated got into a little scuffle. They were brought before Coulter's court, and as they were now arm-in-arm friends better than ever before, Coulter fined them a total of 1¢ and costs, and he dutifully sent the 1¢ fine on to the Clerk of the Superior Court. "Friendly fights" got to be quite common and in every such instance Coulter fined the participants a total of 1¢ and costs. Two brothers got into a fight which did not appear to be friendly. The brother who started the fight was fined \$5.00 and costs. This same brother appeared before Coulter's court in two other cases of light assault and in each instance drew a fine of \$1.00 and costs. For hitting a Negro over the head with his fist and kicking him twice, a person was fined 1¢ and costs. In another instance with less provocation a person was fined 50¢ for kicking another person twice. Coulter bound over to the Superior Court under a \$300 bond a person for shooting into an automobile parked on the streets of Connelly Springs. A person who was carrying a pistol wrapped up in a silk handkerchief, was bound over to the Superior Court under a \$100 bond. Two persons broke into a third person's house and stole a suit of clothes and a pair of shoes, which they tried to sell, but being unsuccessful they took the stolen property back and laid it down in a road near the house. Unable to provide a \$200 bond they were sent to jail to await trial in Superior Court. An unusual case as well as an unusual fine related to a person who attempted to prevent another person from passing along a public highway. Coulter fined the culprit \$50.00 and costs, but the fine was to be withheld on condition that he "attend Sunday School, preaching, prayer meeting League or B.Y.P.U. every Sunday for 12 months."

In communities where Negroes made up a considerable part of the population, they made up even a bigger part of court cases. No Negroes lived within the limits of Connelly Springs, but to the northward in their little settlement they made judicial grist for Coulter's judicial mill. In 1910 Salina Johnson swore out a warrant against her husband Ed, saying that he beat and abused in an inhuman manner herself and her little daughter Anne, beating Anne with a dogwood stick and using a strap on Salina. No record of the trial was found, if, indeed, one was ever held—no doubt being dismissed as just a little family quarrel, so common among the colored folk.

But the next time Ed Johnson got into trouble it was more than a little family quarrel. It all had to do with a cup of coffee. The *dramatis personae* were the following: Ed Johnson, the head of the household and principal actor; Salina, his wife; Lou, his mother;



Charlie, his brother; and Ada, his sister. Scene I, Ed's house and yard; Scene II, Justice Coulter's court room. Scene I, Act I begins peaceably enough: Salina asks Ed whether he wants a cup of coffee or a cup of tea. Ed paying no attention to her question makes no answer, whereupon Salina makes him a cup of tea. But it turned out that it was a cup of coffee that Ed wanted. Scene I, Act II begins with Ed going into action. He gives Salina five or six good licks and knocks her across the bed with the fire shovel. Next he begins on his dear old mother Lou; he knocks her down and kicks her out into the yard and hurts her back. Apparently Charlie closed his eyes to some of this high drama and discreetly stayed on the sidelines; but he saw enough to testify in Coulter's court. Scene II, Act I begins in Coulter's courtroom. After hearing all the evidence, Justice Coulter declares Ed guilty of levying unprovoked warfare against his family and kindred, and fines him \$10.00 and costs amounting to \$7.50. Scene II, Act II begins with the warring tribe in the face of the law, coalescing according to their ancient African heritage. Ed has no money, so he can make no contribution to keeping himself out of jail. Salina is able to raise 95¢; Charlie locates 55¢ in his pocket; Lou having nothing is able to raise a loan of \$1.95 from the audience and to mortgage her organ for the rest. *Exeunt omnia* and Ed goes free.

In another case, Willis Ervin, Coulter's favorite Negro workman, was charged by his wife Martha with beating her. The evidence was sufficient with the testimony of Martha and her three daughters, Harriet, Lizzie, and Dora, for Justice Coulter to fine Willis \$3.00 and costs, "it being a free for all fight . . . in which all willingly engaged but in which no deadly weapon was used or serious damage done but that the father was arbitrary & while it was a frivolous case," judgment must be rendered.

An attempted rape by one Negro upon another led Coulter to bind over to the Superior Court the would-be raptist and place him under a \$500 bond. Unable to make bond the Negro was placed in jail to await trial. In 1904 Bill Quickle greatly disturbed public worship at Israel's Chapel, a Negro Methodist church, by "cursing, swearing, firing his pistol a number of times" and by other loud noises. Justice Coulter fined him \$20.00 and costs. Being unable to raise the money, Bill was sent to jail. The witnesses in this case were all Negroes, as was the culprit. They were Sam Jenkins, Linn Misher, George Johnson, Willis Ervin, Mon Reese, and I. M. Dooley. In 1899 Joe Connelly and Dood Jenkins attacked John Ervin, Willis's old father. Coulter fined Joe \$1.00 and costs. Dood did not appear and seemed to have fled the state.

These were the principal cases that came before Coulter both as to their kind and some of their personnel. They were characteristic of the times and did not indicate that Connelly Springs and its environs were a more lawless region than other parts of the state.

## CHAPTER XIV

### EDUCATIONAL, RELIGIOUS, AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

SINCE Coulter never got beyond the old field schoolhouse in his formal education, he early came to the determination that his children and the other children of Burke County should not want for educational opportunities. He often said that he would rather leave a good education to his children than wealth, for education was something which could neither be lost nor stolen. He acted on this principle throughout his life.

In 1897, only a few years after coming to Connelly Springs, he was appointed by the Burke County Board of Education to be one of the school committeemen for Lovelady Township, Number 2. He was made secretary of the committee. At this time Robert L. Patton, Sr. was chairman of the Burke Board of Education and was to continue for some years. He was the outstanding educator of Burke County and through his success as a teacher and school administrator he had won the love and respect of everyone who knew him or had heard of him. An account of his life read like a sketch from a story book. According to legend when in 1866 his father sent him out for a load of wood, he never returned for ten years. He walked all the way to Illinois where he started to school at Hillsboro Academy. From there he went to Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire and on to Amherst College for four years. It was evident that education was his passion.

But Patton had grown old in the service and the vigor of youth had been used up, so much so that by the early 1900's he appeared to be neglecting the rural schools. In 1907, Coulter was elected a member of the Burke County Board of Education as a recognition of his interest in the Burke schools. His first move was an attempt to supplant Patton with a certain young man, also a person who had



struggled up from the bottom—Thomas L. Sigmon. A concerted effort had been made at this time to elect Sigmon, who lived at Rutherford College and was mayor of the village. A petition signed with 50 names had been sent up to the Board asking for the election of Sigmon, "a most worthy Christian Gentleman, a deacon in Connelly Springs Baptist Church, an ardent advocate of education." Urged on by this petition Coulter had voted for Sigmon. The term of office for the superintendent was two years, and in the next election Coulter voted for Patton, Sigmon having failed of election.

But in the meantime Coulter was not neglecting the promotion of Sigmon nor was Sigmon, himself. The two were to have a longtime friendship—a sort of Damon and Pythias combinaiton. It seems that the two first came to know each other and became somewhat associated together in 1901, when Sigmon was elected to the Connelly Springs Debating Society, which was one of Coulter's special interests. After Sigmon's defeat for the superintendency of the Burke schools, Coulter began to advocate his election to the legislature. In 1908 he wrote for the Morganton paper a long article of fulsome praise of Tom Sigmon, "a man who has been his own architect, who has risen from the humblest walks of life, surmounted every obstacle and forged his way to the front, and today stands an equal to any educator or instructor of our boys and girls in this or any other county in the Old North State." In the Democratic convention in Morganton, held in September, Coulter nominated Sigmon for representative in the legislature, and although there was some effort to nominate Coulter, he succeeded in putting Sigmon across. In the election Sigmon won.

In the meantime the movement against Superintendent Patton continued to mount. A lady from Worry had, indeed, become worried about Patton and she wrote Coulter, now on the Board, to tell him so. She praised Patton for the work he had done, but the Burke schools now needed a new leader. She had for Patton a "high esteem," "but his days of usefulness are over, and our public schools are in a deplorable condition." At this time the Board was composed of only three members, the other two being J. H. ("Hamp") Giles and J. T. McGimsey. The Coulter-Giles combination of friendship was even closer than the Coulter-Sigmon. In 1911, when Patton's term ran out Coulter nominated Sigmon and with Giles's support elected him, McGimsey voting for Patton. The Board now established the policy that the superintendent must visit every school in the county at least once a year. Now for the next thirteen years Sigmon was the head of the Burke County schools and carried on his work faithfully.

There were people in Morganton who believed that the Board

had mistreated Patton, and for this reason if no other, they opposed Sigmon and laid their plans to get rid of him. To freeze him out financially they got a law through the legislature, special for Burke only, forbidding the Board of Education to pay the superintendent more than \$600 a year unless he devoted his full time to the position, and in that case he should not receive more than \$1,000. When Coulter heard of this law he wrote to J. Y. Joyner, State Superintendent of Education, complaining about such treatment of the Burke schools. Joyner replied, July 23, 1913, explaining that this was the first that he had heard of the law, that it had been slipped through the legislature without coming before the Committee on Education. He was indignant and promised to use his best efforts in getting the law repealed—and he succeeded. Joyner pointed out that a mere copyist in the county courthouse, "collector of taxes, and an arrester of criminals," received more than the law allowed the superintendent of education. Further he said, "The shaper of the civilization of present and future generations ought it seems to me be worth at least as much as the keeper of dead records and the guardian of criminals." Failing in this effort "to get" Sigmon, his enemies secured the passage of a law to increase the Board of Education from three to five members; but even this move did not unseat Sigmon.

Finally in 1924 Sigmon made a mis-step, which he undoubtedly regretted for the rest of his life, and which led him to resign. He died in September, 1935. With Sigmon's resignation, the Board now elected Patton's son, Robert L. Patton, Jr., who continued to hold the position throughout the rest of Coulter's tenure and years beyond.

Coulter was probably the most active member of the Board. He constantly advocated more and better schools, increases in the salaries of the teachers, longer school terms, and the setting up of local tax districts. He visited many of the schools and was called upon frequently to attend the school commencement exercises, to "cry sales" at school box suppers, and to settle disputes that arose.

Over the years there were changes now and then in the personnel of the Board. In 1915 Coulter's good friend J. H. Giles resigned and was succeeded by A. N. ("Ab") Dale. In 1921 Coulter was elected chairman of the Board. Under his chairmanship the board consisted of A. N. Dale, J. P. Bumgarner, W. S. Butler (succeeded by Frank Brinkley), and W. E. McConnaughey. The regular meetings of the Board were once a month, but Coulter frequently called special meetings. Finally in 1927 he came to the conclusion that someone living in Morganton should be chairman and at that time he resigned the chairmanship; but he continued on the Board as a member.

Coulter was not left unaware of the high esteem in which he was held by those interested in the educational advancement of Burke County. Maud Anthony, Rural Supervisor, wrote him in 1922, "I wonder sometimes if there is any man in Burke County who has the interest of education so at heart as you have, Mr. Coulter. Some day when you are gone, everybody will see and appreciate what you have done when it's too late to tell you." In 1927 Superintendent Patton in sending out his customary Christmas greetings to the members of the Board and thanking them for their interest in education, added to the greetings which he sent to Coulter, "I find this especially true in your case this year since you have given so much of your time and energy to the little rural folks of this county and have had a vision big enough to see the fine things to be done and have always been considerate, even tempered and interested. You have already rendered a service greater than you value it to Burke County schools in the most trying year we have had."

In 1941 at the annual banquet of the Board, Superintendent Patton paid tribute to Coulter and presented him with a Bible with the following inscription:

Presented to  
Mr. J. E. Coulter  
by  
R. L. Patton  
on  
the forty-fifth Anniversary  
of  
his service to the  
boys and girls of  
Burke County  
as a  
Member of  
The Burke County Board of  
Education  
October 21, 1941

During the latter part of 1942 and on down into 1943 Coulter was absent from all meetings of the Board. The minutes for March 1, 1943 noted "all members present except Mr. Coulter who has been critically ill for some time." And at the same meeting the following resolution was adopted: "By unanimous consent, upon a motion by Mr. Whisnant seconded by Mr. Carpenter, it was ordered that a sincere vote of thanks be extended to Mr. J. E. Coulter who has



served on this Board for a period of nearly forty years, and to Mr. L. F. Brinkley who has served for twenty years; for their faithful and efficient service to the children of this county. At all times and under most trying circumstances both gentlemen have placed the welfare of the boys and girls of this county foremost in considering all questions relative to the development of the schools. As they retire from the Board we wish to express our regrets upon losing them as members, and to extend a vote of appreciation for the unselfish service they have rendered." To be exact, Coulter had served for 37 years.

Debating was an educational and intellectual activity in which Coulter was greatly interested. In 1898 he was the moving spirit in organizing the Connelly Springs Debating Society. The first meeting of citizens interested in the movement took place on January 28th, and on February 11th the society was organized with a constitution and by-laws: "We the undersigned do declare ourselves an association for mutual improvement in elocution and Debate, and for enlarging our fund of general intelligence, in the pursuit of which we desire to exhibit a due consideration for the opinions and feelings of others, to maintain a perfect command of temper in all our intercourse, to seek after the truth in all our exercises. . . ." At first the meetings were to be every week, and this schedule was long adhered to, with a few periods of discontinuances and reorganizations. It was still going for at least eleven years. The officers were elected monthly, and Coulter, who started out as Secretary-Treasurer, was generally continued in that office. Subjects for debate were suggested by any member and then voted on by the full meeting; and besides the debate at each meeting there were an orator and a reader, who chose their own subjects. At least once the meeting was enlivened by the Griffin String Band of five pieces. The president appointed two captains, who chose their debaters—generally three on a side. There grew up a tendency for about eight or ten men always to be chosen, meeting after meeting, and any others who were chosen generally declined and preferred to listen to the debates. The two captains had to agree on which side they would debate—if no agreement could be reached they probably tossed up a coin, or whoever had the first choice of debater left the other captain to chose which side he would debate. The president appointed three judges who should decide who won. A quorum was six members.

The initiation fee was 10¢ (later increased to 25¢) and the monthly dues were 5¢. To come in late drew a fine of 1¢. In the winter time, when fires were necessary, the firemaker received 4¢ for each night, and Coulter furnished the wood free.

Probably the most constant debater of all was Coulter, but not far behind were George Hauss, Frank Coulter, Theo McGalliard, Dave Lowman, and Horace Goode. For the first year A. L. Starr and Ott Rockett were frequently in the debates. Very infrequently Ben Abernethy and Pink Hudson participated, and occasionally Lum Martin, Lee Hubbard, Joe and Bill Griffin, Jeff Robinson, Bob Ennis, and Arthur Parker. The older men ran the Society and did most of the debating, but after a year or two some of the youngsters joined the Society and now and then got in on the debating. Alvin Augustus Coulter (son of J. E.) was the most frequent debater of the younger members, but also in this membership were Grover ("Toot") Hill, Walter Lefevers, Farrior ("Ned") Southerland, Will Hauss (January 14, 1890-September 15, 1928), and Marvin Hauss (March 26, 1888-July 18, 1915).

Coulter soon became well known over the county and regions beyond as a person who would go almost any distance to engage in a debate. There were debating clubs scattered widely over the country, meeting in rural churches and schoolhouses and in convenient places in the villages. Coulter went frequently to Big Hill and to Valdese to engage in debates, to the Salem Methodist Church near Morganton, and as far away as the Ebenezer Schoolhouse out from Henry in Lincoln County. The subject he liked to debate above all others was "Resolved that the heathen will be lost without the Gospel according to the Scriptures." He wore out a Bible searching for arguments proving that the heathen would be lost without the Gospel. One of his favorite quotations was from the Psalms, 9:17, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." He argued that all the nations of the earth had been preached to on the day of Pentecost, and that the heathen had forsaken God. Coulter had wanted to debate this subject at the Ebenezer Schoolhouse, but the people getting up the debate, objected and said that "it was not an appropriate [subject] for sinners (which most of them confessed to be) to discuss," and they chose the subject, "Resolved that war has been more destructive than intemperance." Knowing Coulter's position on the liquor question, they put him on the negative, feeling no doubt that he would refuse to debate on the other side. Another person would not debate the heathen question because he was a Missionary Baptist, assuming that, of course, the heathen would be lost without the Gospel—if not, why send out missionaries?

The number and variety of queries debated were great, showing what the serious-minded people of the day thought about moral, intellectual, national, and international subjects, which were uppermost



around the twentieth century. The first subject which the Connelly Springs Debating Society discussed was that old-time favorite, "Resolved that the pen is mightier than the sword."

Testing their ability to think deep on moral and esthetic problems, they discussed: Is nature more beautiful than art? Is anticipation more pleasant than realization? Is the hope of reward a greater incentive to human action than the fear of punishment? Should capital punishment be abolished? Is self interest the underlying principle of every human action? Are people the architects of their own fortunes? Is love a stronger passion than anger? Is there more satisfaction in hope than in memory? Is city life preferable to country life? Is instrumental music in churches right and proper? Does the Bible give greater proof of a Supreme Being than nature?

Then coming down to more practical values: Is fire more destructive than water? Is gold more useful than iron? Is the horse more valuable than the cow? Are coal mines more beneficial than gold mines? Has the introduction of machinery been beneficial to mankind? Is the cotton mill more important than the sawmill?

Of course no debating society could get along without discussing women: Is the love of women greater than the love of money? Should women have equal rights with men? Are women more influential over men than money? Should women be allowed to vote? Should a man be forced to prove that he can take care of a family before he is allowed to marry? Is married life preferable to single?

No intelligent debating society could neglect the subject of education: Is there more power in education than in wealth? Does travel educate more than reading? Should co-education be discontinued in high schools and colleges? Does literary education tend toward Christianity? Is education a greater influence in forming human character than nature and observation? Should education be compulsory?

King Alcohol and that lesser evil tobacco came in for discussion: Should the manufacture and sale of whiskey be prohibited in the United States? Is intemperance a greater curse than war? Is intemperance a greater curse to mankind than all other evils combined? Should a farmer have the right to sell the products of his farm to a distiller? All the Coulters in the Society (John Ellis, his son Alvin Augustus, and his brother Frank) debated the negative side of this question and lost. Tobacco came in for this query: Should the sale and manufacture of tobacco be prohibited? If Frank Coulter had debated this subject he would have, no doubt, chosen the negative side, in the light of the fact that he got such pleasure out of "chewing the weed."



Lo! the poor Indian: Does the Indian have a better right to the United States than the white man? Should the Indian be made a citizen? Was the Negro more cruelly treated than the Indian?

Historical teasers came up now and then: Does Washington deserve more honor for defending America than Columbus for discovering it? In time of war, have greater deeds of heroism been on land or on sea? Does present military genius surpass that of ancient times? Was Washington a greater general than Lee? (The judges declared the debate on this subject to be a tie).

Local, state, national, and world problems were threshed out: Should the public roads be maintained by taxation and not by individual labor? Should the right to vote be based on the ability to read and write? Should there be free and unlimited coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1? Should the Negro be colonized? Is it right and proper for the United States to dig the Panama Canal? Should the United States annex Cuba? Should the United States help Cuba in its struggle for independence? Should the United States withdraw its soldiers from foreign lands? Is the present war with Spain justified? Is the world growing morally worse? Does China have the right to expell all foreigners? Do the signs of the times indicate the downfall of the United States? Has the United States reached the zenith of her glory? Is the United States growing morally worse? Was the discovery of America beneficial to the world? Is the destiny of the United States in the hands of the millionaires? The Society facetiously accepted the query, "Resolved that the earth is round," and then voted it down and substituted the query, "Resolved that immigration should be abolished."

For debating some of these queries all that was necessary was a facile tongues; but some of them required considerable study and reading. Coulter kept a tablet in which he put down many of his arguments and made debating a serious exercise. In most of the decisions recorded, his side won.

Many organizations were tinged with an educational program, but some were more for business than for education. There were Fairs, Farmers Institutes, Agricultural Exhibit Cars, the Farmers Alliance, and the Farmers Educational & Co-Operative Union of America. The farmer and his problems, like the poor, were always with us. Coulter played his part in all these organizations.

The Catawba Fair Association held its fair in Hickory annually for many years, which exhibited among its attractions livestock and farm and home products. In 1910 Coulter was one of the Directors and was the head of the Sheep and Swine Department. In 1914 he was a

District Vice President; and in 1916 he was one of the marshals, mounted with badge and rosette.

Much more educational than fairs but much less spectacular were the Farmers Institutes. Under the direction of Tait Butler they were going full swing during the first decade of the twentieth century and slightly longer. Butler was followed by T. B. Parker. These institutes were held from June to September and at times during this period when convenient to the local population. Many practical subjects of interest to farmers were discussed such as forage crops, deep plowing, crop rotation, livestock—in fact whatever interested farmers. Local farmers as well as state experts spoke at these institutes. For most of the time when institutes were in style Coulter headed the Burke County Committee. It was his duty to set the time, place, and subject to be discussed, after getting the opinions of the leaders in the community.

Closely associated with the Farmers Institutes were the Agricultural Exhibit Cars. These were railroad cars specially adapted to the display of farm machinery and the products of fields and orchards. According to the announcement of the arrival of the car (sometimes more than one car): "The Exhibit is instructive, educational, and interesting, and something worth coming to see." Many farmers were less interested in hearing talks at institutes than in seeing the sights in the Exhibit Car. Coulter arranged for the placing of these cars, in Hildebran, Connelly Springs, Valdese, Drexel, and Morganton.

Less for education and more for business, there developed during the 1880's the Farmers Alliance, and by 1890 it was operating in Burke County, with its Farmers State Alliance Business Agency Fund. Shares in the Fund were for sale, and co-operative stores were set up. Coulter bought a share or two in the Connelly Springs Alliance, No. 1492. His chief interest was in the sale of Alliance fertilizers, which were supplied at special prices by the Durham Fertilizer Company. The Carolina Warehouse Company, which seems to have had some connection with the Alliance, sought to promote "Home Mixed Fertilizers" by supplying the ingredients and information on how to mix them—and thus get around "buying a pig in a poke" which the big fertilizer companies were selling in the form of the ready-mixed fertilizers. It supplied nitrate of soda, muriate of potash, sulphate of potash, acid phosphate, kainit, cottonseed meal, ground animal bone, and fish scrap.

The Alliance got into politics and it played out on that key as a farmers' organization. In 1902 another farmers' organization arose, in Texas, where most of such movements started, which came to be

known as the Farmers Educational & Co-Operative Union—or in short, the Farmers Union. It reached North Carolina in 1908. It was primarily interested in warehousing and marketing cotton, and in 1914 it was promoting a bill in Congress to make a loan of \$500,000,000 to farmers on warehouse receipts at 3%. By 1911, it owned throughout the country 1,628 warehouses, mainly for storing cotton; 245 packing houses; and a great variety of other businesses, newspapers, coal mines, banks, flour mills, creameries, stores, phosphate plants, produce exchanges, fertilizer factories, life and fire insurance companies, and other businesses. By 1909 it had a membership of 3,000,000. H. Q. Alexander was the head of the North Carolina Division.

The Farmers Union first appeared in Burke County in 1909 when Coulter was being urged to organize a local. By 1912 twenty locals had been set going with a membership of about 400. The Farmers Union Warehouse Company was set up in Morganton with Samuel M. Asbury as manager and Coulter one of the Directors. Since Burke County grew no cotton the warehouse became in reality a supply house for "Feed stuffs, heavy groceries, Fertilizers and Implements."

The Connelly Springs region combined with Rutherford College and organized the Rutherford College Local Union, F. E. & C. U. of A., No. 792. The seal contained the device of a plow with a hoe and rake crossed leaning over the plow stock. Meetings were held monthly and were secret. There was a certain amount of hocus-pocus, signs and pass words. The meetings opened and closed with singing an ode; there was also a prayer. Dues were \$1.00 a year. For a time meetings were tried twice a month. A picnic with lemonade was tried now and then. Secrecy seems to have been the use of the old custom of organizations to create an interest and secure members. Certainly the Farmers Union meetings engaged in nothing more exciting or conspiratorial than short talks on the best methods of raising corn and feeding chickens, how stump-pulling was carried on, and other farm problems.

Being instrumental in organizing the local, Coulter naturally took a prominent part in it. Some of the time he was vice president and at other times the secretary-treasurer. He was generally the delegate to state meetings. His brother Frank was president most of the time. The greatest number of members was 43 in 1915, when women were admitted; but there is no evidence that many, if any, attended. The newness of the organization soon wore off with many members, and having learned all the secrets and how unexciting they were, members began to drop out. From August, 1916 to March, 1917 the organization was dormant, and when revived its membership num-



bered 24. Soon the meetings dwindled down to six or seven, and on September 22, 1917, with seven members present it finally "gave up the ghost," though it had adjourned to meet in October. With the Rutherford College local dead, Coulter joined the Valdese Local, No. 867, but within two years it "went the way of all the earth." In fact the whole Farmers Union organization, at least in North Carolina, was fading out by 1919. This farmers' movement collapsed because too much of the local funds had to go to the state and national organization without any visible returns; and because it got into politics. "To a large extent the Farmers Union has repeated identically the same fatal mistakes that were made by its predecessors, the Farmers Alliance," said J. Z. Green, a state leader, who wanted the locals to be practically independent and enter into a loose organization which he would call the "Farmers Business Union."

Yet the Rutherford College local had done something more than hold senselessly secret meetings in which people were told no more exciting things than how to feed chickens. It had organized a warehouse and erected a building in Connelly Springs and had chosen Coulter to be its manager. Coulter laid in a supply of sugar, flour, feedstuffs and grain, fertilizer, nitrate of soda, nails, plow points, terra cotta, rice, lard, and other heavy groceries—the staple needs of farmers. The attempt was made to keep from coming too closely into competition with regular merchants, by allowing only members to purchase from the warehouse. Prices at the warehouse were, of course, cheaper than at the merchant stores, for by buying in large quantities the Farmers Union got lower prices; and the mere size of the organization was not without its effect in securing reductions. Coulter got a commission on what he sold.

One of his biggest sales was of fertilizers, which were bought from the large manufacturers, who saw the wisdom of selling at a lower price to the Farmers Union warehouses. As this organization began to decline, the fertilizer companies began increasing their prices and refused to give the locals any special discounts. In 1917 the fertilizer committee for the state found only one firm handling fertilizer which agreed on a discount, the Co-Operative Warehouse Company of Salisbury, and it sent out this advice: "Now since they are the only one that has come to us, we have decided and determined to give them our entire business and support this fall. And we call upon every Union Man to stand by us and show the fertilizer people that our organization can stand together as well as they can against us."

The plea also went out for the farmers to mix their own fertilizer and save at least \$15.00 a ton. The Union fertilizer committee

stated that mixing cottonseed meal with ground rock phosphate was equally as good as the 8-2-2 which was so generally used by farmers and for which the fertilizer companies would charge at least \$15.00 more than what these ingredients would cost.

Coulter was equally as active along religious and eleemosynary as educational lines. In 1896 Tulah Cates of Burlington wrote him, "We have been building to our church here and I thought perhaps you would give five dollars toward it as Father buys a great deal of lumber from you." He sent her a contribution for which she thanked him. He gave larger amounts to various schools, colleges, and other organizations. In addition to giving land for the new Rutherford College campus, years before when the Methodist Church took over the school and finished the interior of the building, he made a contribution "for purchase and finishing Rutherford College," as seemed becoming since he had provided some of the lumber. And years later by making another gift he became a member of "The Friends of Rutherford College Club." He made a contribution to the Collegiate Institute at Mount Pleasant and for some years he made an annual contribution to Lenoir College at Hickory. He made gifts to the North Carolina Sunday School Association; to the Lutheran Orphanage Home in Salem, Virginia; to the Oxford Orphan Asylum; to the Good Shepherd Home; to the North Carolina Tuberculosis Association; to the Anti-Saloon League; and to various other organizations of a like nature. Of course he contributed to the American Red Cross, and during the First World War years he was in charge of collections for the Connelly Springs region. He worked largely through the churches, and in 1918 the collections amounted to \$137.14. He was generally on the county committee for the Red Cross Christmas Seals Drive. He was not neglected by those in hard luck or had "hard luck stories." One such wrote him, "I am in affel bad condision My wife is in the hospitile an I cant leave, the little girl is sick an if you please send me five dollars so I can get her some medison an I will pay you just as soon as I can get out and get it." Such loans were in reality gifts and were considered so at the time.

Singing gave great satisfaction to Coulter, not the concert type, of course, but simply good country singing out of a book with shaped notes. He would sit for an hour at a time in his home singing by himself from one of his many song books, beating time with his hand. Like debates, song fests would be got up occasionally, where the whole neighborhood interested in singing, would attend. In 1915 he suggested to his mother that he would visit her on a given date and

bring with him one of his singing partners George A. Hauss and sing some of the old songs for her.

At no time in his life did he ever think of taking individual singing lessons; but there was an institution in vogue during the first decade of the twentieth century known as the Singing School. If there was one in reach he would attend it, and if none came near enough he would pass around a list for subscribers to put down whatever amount they pleased to be used in hiring a singing master to conduct such a school. One of his favorite singing masters was N. M. Cordell of Lincolnton.

It needed not be near Christmas times for Coulter to start "Joy to the world, the Lord is come," nor did any special occasion suggest the song with these lines:

He's the Lilly of the Valley,  
The bright and morning star.  
He's the fairest of ten thousand to my soul.

"Listen to the Mocking Bird" was always a favorite with him.

H. R. Christie's *Favorite Songs*, published in 1879, must have been Coulter's first songbook, for on January 11, 1880 he signed his name in the book; but it is possible that he could before that time have had another songbook in his library of such books, one published in 1867: William Walker's *The Christian Harmony: Containing a Choice Collection of Hymns and Psalm Tunes, Odes and Anthems, Selected from the Best Authors in Europe and America*. . . . Probably his favorite songbook—he nearly wore it out singing from it—was *Best of All. A Superior and Varied Collection of Gospel Songs and Hymns for Sunday Schools, Church Services, Prayer Meetings, Revival Meetings, Young People's Societies and all Kinds of Religious Work*, by Samuel W. Beazley and James H. Ruebush, published by the Ruebush-Kieffer Company of Dayton, Virginia, in 1907. Also Coulter bought songbooks from A. J. Showalter of Dalton, Georgia and the North Georgia Music Company of Marietta, Georgia.

In religion Coulter was a Lutheran. Like most people he inherited his religion no less than his name. He was not a narrow emotional religionist, but more of the ordinary good-citizen type. There was a law that freight trains should not run on Sundays unless carrying livestock. He thought this law a good one and that the railroads ought to obey it. During the first decade of the twentieth century he kept tab as well as he could on the trains running through Connelly Springs, and if he found a violation of the law he reported it to the



county authorities and offered himself as a witness. The story grew up that the Southern Railway had a few old white mules which they loaded in cattle cars of trains running on Sundays, and thus escaped the penalty of the law; for it was legal for trains to run on Sundays when carrying livestock.

Coulter read his Bible frequently, not only for debate arguments but also for the consolation he got. One Bible at least he wore into a frazzle. In 1927 he noted that he had read the Old Testament three times and the New Testament, six times. This habit of keeping tab on the number of times he had read through the Bible, he got from his mother, who read through it at least a dozen times.

Whenever it was not convenient to attend a Lutheran Church he would enter the doors of any other church at hand. Summing up the list of churches he had attended in 1923, he noted the following: the Methodist Church at Rutherford College, Camp Free Methodist Church near Connelly Springs, Trinity Lutheran Church in Caldwell County, St. Andrews Lutheran Church in Hickory, St. Pauls Lutheran Church in Startown, Sardis Lutheran Church in Catawba County, Mount Hebron Church in Hildebran, the Connelly Springs Methodist Church, and the Connelly Springs Baptist Church.

The Methodist minister at the Connelly Springs church, the Rev. E. J. Poe, wrote Coulter in 1925, "I could always preach a little better when I had you before me, there at Connelly Springs." In 1928 Coulter attended services in the Roman Catholic Church in Asheville, and noted, "my first time in life to worship with them."

When he lived in the "Nation," he and his family attended the Sardis Lutheran Church. When he moved to Connelly Springs he found no church of his faith; but soon he began attending the Trinity Lutheran Church in Caldwell County. The trip was about five miles and the Catawba River had to be crossed on a ferry. A surry and a buggy would generally accommodate him and his family, but it took a long time for the children to get accustomed to crossing the river on a ferry.

The Rev. David A. Goodman was the pastor of this church. Goodman had been ordained to the ministry in 1882 and soon thereafter he began preaching at the Trinity Church and building up a congregation. In 1889 only eight members subscribed to his salary—a pitiful \$27.75 for the year! Of course, the congregation was somewhat larger. By 1902 he had built up the membership to 54 communicants and a Sunday School of 59. The church property was valued at \$400. By this time his salary had been considerably increased. Coulter generally paid from \$6.00 to \$10.00 a year, always coming

second on the list, giving first place to A. A. Lutz or some other one of the Lutz family, who were the foremost of the Caldwell Lutherans in Goodman's congregation. About this time Coulter increased Goodman's income by purchasing from him lath timber—Goodman living on the Burke County side of the Catawba River and owning some timber lands there. On one occasion Coulter bought from him 96 cords of lath timber for \$57.60.

The Lutheran Church was a sort of loose federation (if even a federation) of a multiplicity of Synods, based on natural origins, some variations in creeds, and the accidents of organization. The Tennessee Synod, to which Coulter belonged, had been organized in 1820, being the fourth in the United States. A movement to combine some of the Synods had been going on for a long time and had resulted in the "United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South," which in 1902 had a total membership of 37,900, and later called the "United Lutheran Church in America."

When the Tennessee Synod joined this United Synod, Pastor Goodman was greatly displeased and made plans to enter the Missouri Synod. Coulter was upset by this move by Goodman. In 1907 he wrote to the Rev. Geo. A. Roemoser of Concordia College in Conover asking him to visit the Goodman congregation and explain the doctrines of the Missouri Synod. Goodman himself had told his congregation that the Tennessee Synod by joining the United Synod had lost its identity and had deserted its disciplines and doctrines, that he was not deserting the Tennessee Synod but that it was the deserter. Coulter wrote the Rev. R. A. Yoder, who a quarter century previously had performed Coulter's wedding ceremonies, asking him for advice. Yoder wrote that he saw no good reason for joining the Missouri Synod: "We are the purest American people. Mo. is a bad mixture of foreign elements. We are Southern people, they are Northern & Western, with different ideas of things. And as I think more about it, there is *no reason under the sun* why you should leave the Tenn. synod, in which you & your pastor were all reared, and your fathers. It was good enough for them, and it ought to be for you."

Pastor Goodman quit preaching at Trinity and joined the Missouri Synod, taking with him Coulter and some others of his congregation. Now, here was a pastor and his flock with nowhere to preach to them. He held services once or twice in the Harmony Methodist Church near Icard, but before the end of the year 1907 he had begun to preach in the Drowning Creek Schoolhouse, generally twice a month. At the business meeting following preaching on January 22, 1908,

Coulter made a motion that a church building be erected in the vicinity and that it be called Luthers Chapel. Coulter was elected Secretary-Treasurer and a committee was appointed to get an option on a site for the new church building. Waitsell Starns offered a site free. The congregation tried hard to develop strength. They invited occasionally some member of the Concordia College faculty to come up and preach—Professor C. A. Weiss and Professor George Luecke. At one of the services Coulter read a paper on the Reformation. The membership failed to grow—hardly ever being more than 20 at any service. The church building was forgotten and the congregation ceased to function after 1911. Six years later Pastor Goodman died and was buried at St. Johns Lutheran Church near Conover.

With the demise of the Goodman congregation, Coulter joined the Mount Hebron Lutheran Church in Hildebran, which belonged to the United Synod. During the First World War (as, indeed, during the Second), Coulter was intensely anti-German both before the United States entered it, and, of course, afterwards. Coulter now began to think of going back to the Trinity Lutheran Church in Caldwell as a refuge from so many pro-German Lutheran pastors who could not keep their position on the war, out of their sermons and church papers.

In 1918 he wrote to the Rev. W. J. Roof, the pastor at Trinity, asking him whether his sentiments favored the Germans, and asking that if they were, "I would not care to co-operate or remove my church connections to Trinity . . . it seems that there are more Lutheran ministers Pro-German than any other church." Pastor Roof answered that he was no pro-German: "I think that Germany has disgraced her name forever in the atrocious warfare she has been carrying on." The war was soon over, and Coulter continued his membership in the Mount Hebron Church.

In 1932 Coulter noted that he had been teaching Sunday School for the past 31 years and that he was now quitting as his sight and hearing were none too good. He began teaching Sunday School at Trinity Church, continuing it at the Drowning Creek Schoolhouse, and ending it at Mount Hebron. He took great pride in this work and developed a reputation as a good teacher—sometimes when visiting churches of other denominations he would be asked to teach a class. He took great pains to prepare for each Sunday's lesson, typing out on sheets of paper various quotations, questions, and answers. He left an impressive pack of these papers. His quotations were not only from the Bible but also from some apt poem to strike home a point. As a note on selfishness he used this quotation:



I had a little tea party,  
This afternoon at three.  
'Twas very small—  
Three guests in all—  
Just I, myself, and me.  
Myself ate all the sandwiches,  
While I drank up the tea.  
'Twas also I who ate the pie  
And passed the cake to me.

Besides the Bible he used as aids a little booklet published annually called *The Gist of the Lesson* and the *Augsburg Senior Lesson Book*, published by the United Lutheran Publication House of Philadelphia. Superintendent Patton of the Burke County Board of Education presented him now and then the annual publication, *Points for Emphasis. A Vest Pocket Commentary on the International Sunday School Lessons*, and for years Miss Beatrice Cobb of the Morganton *News-Herald* made him a Christmas present of F. N. Peloubet's *Selected Notes on the International Sunday School Lessons*.

## CHAPTER XV

### CHILDREN

THERE were eight children in the Coulter family, six boys and two girls. The first born was Alvin Augustus (September 2, 1883-October 8, 1959), the second of his given names being for his paternal grandfather. Being the oldest of the children he became their hero, but another reason was his generosity, ever mindful of not *only* his brothers and sisters but of his parents also. When he had gone out into the world to make his living he never let a Christmas go by before he had sent a generous check home to be divided among the rest of the family. With careful hoarding, the younger children made this fund last a long time as they levied on it for candy and trinkets. At other times when he felt that a little check on some special occasion might come in handy he was quick to send one. And he made very substantial gifts to his father when business exigencies made them desirable.

He was of a restless nature; his wanderlust hardly knew bounds, not simply for going from one place to another, but more particularly for searching for better jobs. In his middle 'teens he bought a bicycle and began peddling in the vicinity (and especially selling to Coulter's workmen) patent medicines, cheap jewelry, and trinkets: Japanese oils, pills, pain cures, corn cures, worm candy, rings, watches, stick pins. He fired the dry kiln off and on for a year or two. And one day he fell in with that custom prevalent among the smart, adventure-some, and bold boys "to run away from home," for no reason at all except for the thrill of knowing that their parents did not know where they were. But a few days were sufficient for Alvin Augustus, and he was back home again; probably he had got as far away as Asheville. It was about this time when he wanted to join the United States Navy, and his father consented by writing to the *USS Franklin* at

the Norfolk Navy Yard, "I have a son 17 years old, well grown, very apt, good mathematician, excellent in Geography & History, somewhat deficient in Grammar. He desires to enter the Navy; he will meet your requirements as to height & weight; is of a very determined disposition; would stick to his post under all circumstances. . . . Kindly let me hear from you with such information as is necessary." He was informed that no one could enlist on board the ship except by order of the Navy Department; and here the navy career of Alvin Augustus ended.

In an effort to hold his son to a career at home his father established a firm, at least on paper, known as "J. E. Coulter & Son," but nothing came of this. Alvin Augustus had a mechanical turn which would have sent him far up the ladder of success if he had submitted it to college training; but as he never extended his formal education beyond the "old field school," this talent remained somewhat in the rough. His interests were strongly along engineering lines, that is the practical side of machinery, and the railway seemed the easiest entry. His first position was with the W. J. Oliver Construction Company when they were levelling down some of the high grades on the Southern Railway near Connelly Springs. This work was of short duration, and soon Alvin Augustus was on his way out into the wide world. He turned up at Georgetown, Louisiana, working at a sawmill; but when the harvest season set in he was off for the wheat fields of Kansas. With the harvest over, he began working on the Missouri Pacific Railroad out of Osawatomie, Kansas. The time was 1905; but this same year he moved westward to Arizona where he worked with the Sante Fe Railroad for a few years. Then he went to Peru to work with the Cerro de Pasco Copper Company in 1908 for two years; and when the United States began digging the Panama Canal he began work there for four years, but in the meantime returning to Peru for a year. He was soon talking of engaging in the cattle business somewhere in South America; but with the United States beginning to build the Alaskan Railway, he unsuccessfully sought a position there. He thought of doing something in South Africa but did not pursue that idea far.

In 1915 he ran a sawmill for a short time at Whitmire, South Carolina, and then worked for a construction company building a great dam at Great Falls, South Carolina. In 1916 he came back to Connelly Springs and decided to start the manufacture of canvas gloves. He set up a factory and continued in this business until the next year, when he was off again—this time to Camaguey, Cuba where he worked with a railway for two years, before going back to Peru. After a visit or two home he was still in Peru in 1924. But finally his wanderings were



over when he became a locomotive engineer on the Seaboard Railway out of Tampa, Florida where he lived until his retirement, and his death in 1959.

The next child in the Coulter family was Beulah Belle (September 28, 1885-). She became Mrs. L. V. Goodman on November 25, 1908 and lived in Asheville.

The third child was named Clyde David Franklin (October 17, 1887-). The David Franklin part of his name was for his maternal grandfather; but since he disliked having three given names he dropped the Franklin. Like his brother Alvin Augustus, he became interested in railroading. Beginning on the Southern Railway out of Asheville, he drifted westward to Arkansas, Missouri, and Iowa; but he soon got the "Florida fever," long before the big land booms started in that state, and went to "The Land of Flowers," where he remained with the Seaboard Railway until his retirement, working principally out of Cedar Keys and Jacksonville. On his retirement he moved back to the old home in Connelly Springs.

The fourth child was named Ellis Merton (July 20, 1890-), the Ellis being part of his father's name. The railroads having no attraction for him, he became a history teacher.

The fifth child was a girl and was named Laura Elvira (March 28, 1893-), the second of her given names was to honor her Grandmother Coulter. When she was less than a year old, her father wrote her Grandmother Coulter, "We had Elvira's [written over Laura, which was the name always used] photograph taken & will bring it down to you." He added, "Alvin and Bula are going to free school." She married Carl Blalock on April 25, 1915, and after his death she married Jesse M. Teas on December 29, 1951. She lived in Texas.

The sixth child was named Ray Daniels (March 11, 1895-), the Daniels to honor Josephus Daniels, whom Coulter greatly admired. He served in the First World War. His parents had hoped that at least one of the children might be anchored in Connelly Springs and they set their hearts on Ray Daniels; but after a try at the farming business he, too, caught the "Florida fever" and settled in Ojus where he entered the automobile business.

The next child was a boy and was named William Bryan (October 22, 1896-), and, of course, the name was to honor the great "Commoner," whom Coulter voted for as often as he ran for the presidency. When William Bryan was 7 months and 26 days old it was reported, "baby can stand (a little) alone." After serving in the First World War, he settled in Washington, D. C., as an accountant.

The eighth and the last of the Coulter children was Herbert Lee

(October 11, 1899-), the Lee undoubtedly for the great Confederate General. After a turn at railroading in North Carolina and then in Florida, he moved back to Connelly Springs and engaged in the hosiery mill business in Valdese.

The Coulter children made up a merry family, and it is rather remarkable that the last child was born before the older children began to disperse to the "four corners of the earth"; but the younger ones remembered the older ones best when they came back on visits, which were never more than a year apart unless in the case of Alvin Augustus when he was in Peru.

School, school, school! All, of course, went to school, and all walked, whether it was a mile or two miles, rain or shine or snow. There was no schoolhouse in Connelly Springs until 1909. As a consequence most of the Coulter children had to walk a greater distance than merely "down town." The first schoolhouse, so designated, was one up the railroad about a half mile, and was known as the Huffman Schoolhouse, since it was on the edge of the old Huffman Graveyard. Another schoolhouse was about a mile and a half down the railroad and was located near Drowning Creek, which name it bore. It was in this house where the Goodman Lutheran congregation met after seceding from the Tennessee Synod. It was built with lumber furnished by Coulter, with Poley Townsend doing most of the carpentry work. It cost \$624. Only two of the Coulter children attended school here and only for a session or two. Another schoolhouse on the Coulter children's list was one built about halfway between Connelly Springs and Rutherford College. Some years later it burned and its site was included in the new Rutherford College campus, which Coulter gave to the College trustees.

The first teacher in Connelly Springs whom any of the Coulter children had, was Margaret Winifred Haliburton ("Miss Minnie") (1855-1928), whose brother was the hotel man and later rural mail carrier. Miss Haliburton taught a school in some improvised building in 1894. She became a well-known educator, teaching for many years in the State Teachers College in Farmville, Virginia, and writing several textbooks. The next teachers, well-known and liked, were Forrest Rockett and his brother Ott Rockett, and A. L. Starr. All of these teachers used some building in the village and taught before 1900. One of the teachers at the Huffman Schoolhouse was George A. Hauss. Other teachers well remembered by the Coulter children were T. L. Sigmon, Ora Reep, and Katie L. Provence. Beginning in 1903 and continuing on until 1920, all of the Coulter children except

the oldest two, attended Rutherford College, which was mostly a high school.

Sometimes there was some whimpering about having to go to school, but going to school came to be liked both for fun and for education. Baseball was the main sport, played at the morning and afternoon recesses, as well as at the longer time given for lunch—but generally called dinner. A certain amount of trading went on. The Hilderbrand children from across the South Mountains generally had pockets full of limbertwig apples, which they hid in the leaves out in the woods, and produced at recesses for trading purposes. "Throwing knives" was another game, somewhat after the order of horse-trading, but differing in that only the end of the knives where the blades were fastened were shown. The hazard was that a knife might have a shiny end but no blades or broken ones. As a guarantee against this kind of trickery, the expression grew up, "Two whole blades or no trade." Another expression was, "Buckhorn handles, barlow blade, the best old knife ever made." At Christmas time the students insisted on the teacher treating them, and unless they got the promise, they might shut out the teacher. Some of the bolder boys might be heard chanting, "Treat, trade, travel—or duck." Whippings were regular procedure for misbehavior; but a compromise might be worked out in letting the culprit off by having him dig a stump.

Friday afternoons were always set apart for speeches, declamations, and sometimes short debates. Every student was required to participate in some form, which generally resulted in what was called a speech, samples of which were:

Buzz, buzz, buzz, I am a bee,  
Buzz, buzz, buzz, here I come,  
Buzz, buzz, buzz, look out for me.

or

Here I stand, all ragged and dirty;  
If you don't come and kiss me, I'll run like a turkey.

or

I know something I aint going to tell,  
Two little niggers in a coconut shell (or big hotel).

or

It took a bold student to say this one:  
Mulberry leaves, calico sleeves,  
All schoolteachers are hard to please.



The parents of the Coulter children did not allow them to say such silly couplets. They had to struggle over memorizing long poems and declamations. "Curfew Shall not Ring Tonight" was recited by one of the girls. "Flag the Train" was a tearful poem of five stanzas in which the death of the engineer was depicted:

Go, flag the train, boys, flag the train!  
Nor waste the time on me;  
But leave me by my shattered cab;  
'Tis better thus to be!  
It was an awful leap, boys,  
But the worst of it is o'er;  
I hear the Great Conductor's call  
Sound from the farther shore.

"Going on an Errand" was a humorous poem of nine stanzas, in which the errand boy gets terribly mixed up, the first stanza being,

A pound of tea at one-and-three,  
And a pot or raspberry jam,  
Two new-laid eggs, a dozen pegs,  
And a pound of rashers of ham.

After getting every possible combination in his mix-up he ends,

A pound of three at one and tea,  
A dozen of raspberry ham,  
A pot of eggs, with a dozen pegs,  
And a rasher of new-laid jam.

Another pathetic poem was "Little Jack," consisting of five stanzas, the first being,

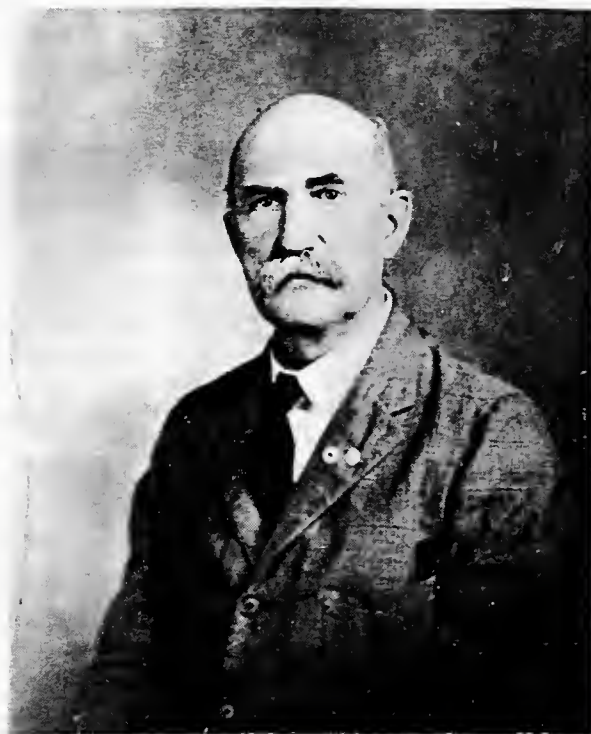
He wore a pair of tattered pants,  
A ragged roundabout,  
And through the torn crown of his hat  
A lock of hair stuck out;  
He had no shoes upon his feet,  
No shirt upon his back;  
His home was on the friendless street,  
His name was "Little Jack."

But in saving the "toddling baby-boy" from being run over by the on-rushing train "Little Jack" loses his life.

A great favorite was "John Maynard," which tells of the steamboat



*Top:* COULTER AND WIFE, OFF FOR A SUNDAY VISIT. *Bottom:* COULTER'S OFFICE.



*Top:* RUTHERFORD COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT CROWD IN 1899, COULTER SECOND FROM RIGHT ON GROUND; UNCLE BILLY HILL, FOURTH FROM LEFT ON GROUND. *Bottom:* COULTER IN MIDDLE AGE.



captain who ran the burning ship ashore but lost his life in doing it. This is the first of eleven stanzas:

'Twas on Lake Erie's broad expanse,  
One bright midsummer day,  
The gallant steamer Ocean Queen  
Swept proudly on her way.  
Bright faces clustered on the deck,  
Or leaning o'er the side,  
Watched carelessly the featherly foam,  
That flecked the rippling tide.

Some of the prose declamations were: "What is a Minority," by John B. Gough; Charles Sumner's "The Grandeur of Nations"; and J. T. Headley's "Last Charge of Ney."

There were other amusements besides going to school. The Coulter children looked forward from year to year to attending the Old Soldiers Reunion in Newton. The first one was held in 1892 and it grew into an institution, not only for honoring the Confederate veterans in speeches and oratory, but especially for people to come together to visit with one another. In 1903 there were 5,000 people in attendance, including about 200 veterans. Professor M. C. S. ("Billy") Noble of the University of North Carolina was the orator. Next to the Reunion was the circus, which the Coulter children attended when it was held in Hickory. John Robinson's was the favorite, but not to be neglected were Barnum and Bailey, Gentry Brothers Dog and Pony Shows, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows, and Sparks World's Famous Shows. Coulter always received a few complimentary tickets for allowing the advance agents to plaster their flaming posters on the sides of his buildings, showing ferocious wild animals and beautiful bareback riders in their tights. Also the Hickory fair afforded spectacles not to be missed, balloon ascensions and in 1912 an actual airship flying.

Of course Christmas, New Year, birthdays, Halloween, St. Valentine's Day, and all such were duly celebrated and observed. For the convenience of Santa Claus, no one ever thought of hanging up stockings, the hats by which all were known were set under a little holley tree; and Santa on his way back to the North Pole was expected to leave something on New Year's. Furthermore he was not expected to come down the chimney; he came through a window, and on one Christmas when snow was on the ground his sled tracks were clearly visible where he had come in through a window and accidentally dropped a few packs of firecrackers. Birthdays called for cakes, of

course; and valentines were sent and received, some quite ugly and humorous and others sentimental. They might be post cards or enclosed in envelopes. And it was a custom to send picture post cards to be collected and preserved in albums.

Games were played outdoors and in—outside “Auntney Over,” “Black Man,” and so on, and inside around the blazing open fireplace “William Trimble Toe,” “Club Fist,” and various others. The first went this way:

William Tremble Toe caught hens,  
Put them in pens.  
Some laid, some didn't.  
Wire briar, limber lock,  
Three geese in a flock,  
One flew east, one flew west,  
One flew over the cuckoo's nest.  
OUT spells out.

(And the first person who shows his teeth gets seven pinches.)

In “Club Fist” the fists of all players were stacked in a vertical row, and then began the rigmarole: “What you got there? Club fist. Take it off or I'll knock it off,” and so on until the last fist was reached, and then, “What you got there? Bread and cheese. Where's my part? The cats ate it. Where's the cats? In the woods. Where's the woods? The fire burt 'em. Where's the fire? The water outened it. Where's the water? The ox drunk it. Where's the ox? The butcher killed it. Where's the butcher? The rope hung him. Where's the rope? The knife cut it. Where's the knife? The hammer broke it. Where's the hammer? Lying behind the kitchen door cracking hickory-nuts; and the first one who shows his teeth gets seven pinches.”

There were conundrums to be propounded, puzzles to be worked, and no end of doggerel and sayings that were not allowed to be recited at school.

Had a little dog, his name was Rover.  
When he died, he died all over.

---

Old Bob White, are your peas ripe?  
No, not quite.  
Will your dog bite?  
Yes, in the night.

As I was going down the New Cut Road,  
I met a possum and a toad.  
Every time the toad would jump,  
The possum hid behind a stump.

---

See the moon, see the moon, see the moon arising,  
Just getting home from a nigger baptising.  
Hear the river roaring, see the river rising,  
Just getting home from a nigger baptising.

---

Went to the river and couldn't get across,  
Jumped on a nigger and thought he was a hoss.

---

Sheep and goat going to the pasture,  
Said the sheep to the goat,  
Can't you go a little faster?

---

Old Molly Hare, what you doing there,  
Running through the cotton field as hard as I can tear.

---

Hello stranger, hello yourself,  
If you want any cornbread, look on the shelf.

---

Some got meat, some got bread,  
Some got nothing but a buzzard's head.

---

I saw Esau kissing Kate,  
Kate saw I saw Esau.

---

God made man, man made money,  
God made bees, bees made honey,  
God made satan, satan made sin,  
God made a hole and put satan in.

There were all sorts of sayings, as "Ugly as home-made sin," "So stingy he would climb over his gate to keep from wearing out the hinges, and stop his clock at night," and "That's no sign of a duck's nest, just because you see a feather on the fence."

There were songs that all liked to sing: "Sweet Marie," "The Cowboy's Lament," "O, Captain, Captain, Tell me True, Does my Sweet William Sail with You?," "Darling Nellie Gray," and so on.



After supper on wintry nights, the Coulter children sitting around the blazing fire, indulged much in riddles and puzzles. What is it?—"Always runs and never walks, has a tongue and never talks"; "Always holds its hands before its face"; "'Twixt heaven and earth, not [knot] on a tree; I've told you this riddle; now tell it to me"; "White and black and red [read] all over"; "Will go up a chimney down, but will not go up a chimney up; will go down a chimney down, but will not go down a chimney up." Then there was the man with the goose, the fox, and the corn, who came to the river. He could take only one over in his boat at a time. If left alone the fox would eat the goose or the goose would eat the corn. How could he get all across safely? Counting the ducks was another riddle: A duck before a duck, a duck behind a duck, and a duck in the middle; how many ducks? And then the squirrel and the ears of corn: There are nine ears of corn in a hollow stump. Every day the squirrel comes and takes out three ears; how long will it take for the squirrel to remove all the corn?

To answer any of these riddles was a great joy, but nothing like being able to make a crow's foot, an accomplishment never to be equalled. It consisted in weaving a piece of string with ends tied together, placed between the two hands about a foot and a half apart, and with the manipulation of the fingers to weave a crow's foot on each hand with a single strand connecting the two feet.

Hunting with gun and dog came in for the boys, but especially with only the dogs on the dark-of-the-moon nights for catching 'possums. The orchestral music of a pack of dogs was enjoyed more than actually catching the 'possum. Rabbit hunting was carried on with gun and dog, but for the younger boys, setting traps was the accepted way of catching them. Traps, made by nailing together four planks to form a box about four feet long or by using a hollow log sawed to that length, were set where a rabbit path was supposed to exist or where the rabbit had gnawed on the bottom rail of a fence. Traps were baited with apples. Either on the way to school or before breakfast the trap would be visited, and if a rabbit had been caught it would likely squeal when pulled out, and if by its head, it did some terrific clawing with its hind feet—it was always desirable to pull it out by its hind legs if possible. The meat was excellent and the skin sold for at least 10¢ when properly cured on a v-shaped board or the forks of a sapling in that shape.

There was always a dog or two around, with often a large dog (generally a collie, called a shepherd) and a small feist. The dogs always went swimming with the boys, and the feist would usually catch the big dog by the tail and be towed along through the water.

Hardly a day in summertime went by that the boys did not go swimming in the pond, and sometimes in the swimming hole below. In the hierarchy of dogs as remembered through the years, were Missie, Bard, various Sheps, and Jerry—a half dozen in succession went under the last name, all fox terriers. And some were never awarded greater dignity than being called Pup. As for cats, there were always too many around.

Birds were plentiful in summer and winter. With the flurries of snow there appeared sparrows of some variety, which were called "snow birds." Traps baited with small grain were set for them, with a trigger to which a string was attached. When the space under the trap appeared sufficiently filled, a hand inside the house pulled the trigger or there might be a trigger which would spring the trap when a bird touched it. The boys also used slingshots to bring down birds. But there was a healthy respect for the rights of birds, which John Ellis emphasized. The "Audubon Society of North Carolina for the Study and Protection of Birds and the Preservation of Game" had secured the enactment of a law in 1903 to promote "a better appreciation of the value of song and insectivorous birds." The law forbade the destruction of all birds not therein described as game birds. The following were listed as not protected: English sparrows, owls, hawks, crows, blackbirds, jackdaws, and rice birds. Coulter strictly forbade his children to kill protected birds, and when a neighbor began shooting bullbats, Coulter reported him to the game warden.

The English sparrow was the most troublesome of the birds, with its ceaseless chattering, getting into everything, and building its nests in gutters. It had been brought to America in 1850, and though called English sparrow it was native to nearly all of Europe. From early spring till fall the nights were made melodious by the whip-poorwills—assisted by the bullfrogs down in the pond. (All the giggling activities of the Coulter boys, as with torches they slipped along the banks or in a boat, did not seem to thin out the frogs—frog legs were considered a special delicacy). Bluebirds were plentiful but later they completely disappeared—and so it was with the buzzards. Catbirds and various other kinds were everywhere; but yellowhammers and woodpeckers were not so plentiful.

When the boys got big enough they were allowed to go down town to the stores to do a little trading with their spending money. Their principal purchases were all sorts of candy, cheese, sardines, potted ham, crackers, peanuts, pickles, pickled pig feet, and whatever tasted good—soft drinks were little advertised and less indulged in. Around Christmas times they invested slightly in oranges, coco-

nuts, and raisins—expecting Santa to bring on a fuller supply. It was hard to resist pulling off two big bananas—2 for 5¢—from the tempting bunches which hung conspicuously on the store porch.

But the Coulter boys had much more to do than go to the store. They did not grow up in idleness when not in school. There was always work on the farm, around the house, or at the mills. The two girls did not find time hanging heavy; there were things to do in the kitchen and elsewhere in the house, and they could always look after the baby in the house, there being one periodically from 1883 to 1899. Pity for those who did not grow up in a family of eight, where something was always going on!



## CHAPTER XVI

### BUSINESS METHODS

**D**URING the nineteenth century and on down through the first decade of the twentieth, ornate letterheads were in style in the business world, showing highly imaginary manufacturing plants and engravings of other objects connected with the particular business. Coulter was conservative in his letterheads, never carrying an illustration, true or imaginary, of his stores and manufacturing plants. However, when he became active in the livestock business he used on his stationery the customary representation of Essex swine, the sow with a litter of pigs. For a long time he had most of his stationery printed by Harrell's Printing House of Weldon; but later he depended on a great many printing plants: Henkle & Company (Socrates, Ambrose L., and Elon O.) of New Market, Virginia; the Brown & Bailey Company of Philadelphia; the Clay Printing Company of Hickory; the *Hickory Democrat*; the *Newton Enterprise*; the *Morganton News-Herald*; and others.

It was a widespread custom among both big businesses and small in the 1890's and on down into the twentieth century to carry on sales by barter rather than by money payments, whenever both parties to the transaction had products of ordinary use. Such transactions generally did not mean that each party needed the product of the other, but that a sale could readily be made of the product received in the exchange. Coulter began bartering shingles and lumber for wagons, trading very extensively with the Spach Brothers of Winston and to a lesser extent with George E. Nissen & Company of the same place, as previously noted. Then came a long and extensive bartering of lumber, shingles, and laths for fertilizers.

As time went on there appeared to be no end to the variety of objects that people wanted to swap for lumber and other forest

products, some of which Coulter was not interested in. It was the early edition of the "Swap Shop" program of the radio era. While Coulter was running his merchandising business during the 1890's he traded considerably in lumber and shingles for tobacco, especially with Shore, Adkins & Company of Kernersville. In 1893 they wrote him, "Could you not now sell us a car load of shingles—4 in. heart pine—for tobacco & cigars?" They wanted a car load for they had a chance to sell them for cash—tobacco manufactures dealing in shingles! They added, "We have plenty of stock tobacco on hand but the trouble these close times is to get money to buy stamps [U. S. Revenue Stamps]." The Panic of 1893 was now on. The next year they wrote, "We would like to trade considerably with you. . . . Can't we trade for a car of shingles, flooring & ceiling & weatherboarding of you?" About this time Coulter traded lumber for a pair of mules, a wagon, and a set of harness.

A man in Ashville wanted to trade for lumber a four-seat surrey which he valued at \$40.00. Another person wanted to trade a bicycle for lumber. A man in Morganton wanted to trade a three-room cottage for lumber; and a furniture manufacturer wanted to trade furniture for lumber. The *Woman's Work*, a paper published in Athens, Georgia, wanted to run in its columns Coulter's grain advertisement to be paid for in wheat, rye, and vetch. A Tar Heel wanted to swap soap for peas, and another wanted to exchange "a bull for beans."

Propositions to swap something for livestock came in frequently. A citizen of Ohio first tried to swap for shingles a Great Dane, which he said would "run down a criminal & catch him, too, if needed," but not succeeding in bringing Coulter into this trade, he varied his tactics. Next he proposed to swap Coulter for an unstated number of Yorkshire pigs, a dog. He had the "finest lot of Golden Brindle Boston Terriers in America bred in the Purple & among the lot I have a fine 15 mos old \$100.00 specimen Dog. He is golden Brindle House Yard Buggy & Automobile Broke & the best Burglar Alarm little Bull specimen on this continent." Still Coulter was not interested. He did a little swapping of turkeys for goats and vice versa. A gentleman from Kerr wanted to swap a 3½ horsepower gasoline engine for 20 pigs. A Virginia lady wanted a sow and some pigs and she was willing to pay for them in turkey eggs, chicken eggs, and white rabbits; for the sow alone she offered 3,000 Lady Campbell violet plants. A Georgian rushed the game by sending Coulter two pairs of "genuine Irish Point lace curtains" and asked him to send in return one or two pigs—Coulter was to decide which. But a South Carolinian offered the most original swap: If Coulter would send him two angora

goats he would repay the kindness by sending in return a "Mathematical School Chart." It gave "all the short methods of Mathematick" and was good "to teach your children or Sell to Some School."

Without banks Coulter would have been lost. He wrote thousands of checks in carrying on his various business enterprises. The banks he dealt with earliest were the Catawba County Bank of Newton, the Bank of Hickory, the Citizens Bank of Hickory, and the First National Bank of Hickory. His later banking activities were mostly with the First National Bank of Morganton, the Bank of Morganton, the Morganton Industrial Bank, and the Peoples Bank of Connelly Springs. Also he engaged extensively in drawing drafts on his debtors but much more extensively in having his creditors draw drafts on him. In either case it obviated writing checks and was a quick way of settling accounts. Sometimes he tried the scheme of passing debts owed to him to one of his creditors, hoping that the creditor would accept as payment or part payment the draft which Coulter had drawn on his own debtor. Sometimes they refused and at other times when they did accept this arrangement the draft might be returned unpaid.

Without credit Coulter would have been lost. In his earlier days he frequently borrowed from individuals and later mostly from banks. In the 1890's the legal rate of interest was 8%. Several times he borrowed from his father and gave notes secured by mortgages on real estate and lumber supplies. In 1897 to secure a loan of \$100 from his father he mortgaged the following supplies, estimated to be worth more than four thousand dollars: 367,754 feet of rough lumber, 174,277 feet of finished lumber, 125,000 laths, and 74,000 shingles. To secure a loan of \$400 from Virginia Ship of Newton he mortgaged four tracts of land and large lumber supplies. His land and lumber came in handy in securing debts which he owed. In securing debts for land he was buying he mortgaged land which he already had as well as lumber supplies. To secure a debt of \$758 to the W. W. Connelly estate for the "Connelly Place" land, he mortgaged large amounts of shingles and laths and about 700,000 feet of lumber and all additions to these supplies but he was "to be allowed to sell in the ordinary course of business from said lumber, etc., but not to reduce the same below seven hundred dollars in value."

This method of obtaining loans and guaranteeing debts made it unnecessary for Coulter to ask anyone to "go on his note"—that is endorse it. But one of his great weaknesses was to go on other people's notes. However often he was forced to pay other people's debts by going on their notes, he never learned his lesson. The ex-



planation was a tenderness in his heart for people who needed money—he would do them a favor by going on their notes. He went on the notes of a great many people borrowing money from the Morganton Industrial Bank, whose president was his good friend J. H. ("Hamp") Giles, and most of these notes (which were generally less than \$100) he was forced to pay. Some notes, in other connections, as large as \$650, he was forced to pay by having obligingly gone on them as a favor to a friend. Back in 1897 he had "stood for" an agent who wanted to sell books for the International Publishing Company of Philadelphia, such as Coulter thought ought to be widely distributed: *Bibles*, *Webster's Everyday Dictionary*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Fox's Book of Martyrs*, *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, *Science of Life*, *Story of the Bible*, and other titles of such a nature. The agent left the debts for Coulter to pay.

Just as Coulter needed credit, so he was liberal in crediting those who dealt with him. He sold most of his lumber and fertilizer on credit, but his livestock and grain sales were generally for cash. In a leaflet advertising his livestock and grain he said: "Now, my friend, as you are a stranger to me, and there is no bank here and no one who is a subscriber to Dunn & Bradstreet's report, and as it would be much trouble to get a report, and besides cause delay, I will ask that you send check or money order for what you want, or if you prefer to do so, you may send one-fourth or one-third of it, and then pay the balance when the goods come to your depot. You can do the way best suited to you, and if you want to know anything about me, write the Bank of Morganton or the First National Bank of Morganton, or any merchant here at this place, or the Postmaster."

As previously mentioned, Coulter often inquired of friends and acquaintances about the reliability of certain prospective customers. One Asheville customer who had learned of Coulter's inquiries as to his financial standing, wrote him that he could consult Dunn & Bradstreet or ask any Asheville bank "and if they don't say I am good pay I will sign a Lie Bill or acknowledge that I am a liar and a fraud." But anyone who came to Coulter's office to buy something could almost invariably buy it on credit—the personal touch was too much for him to resist. So it turned out that through his long business career he credited a great many people who never found themselves able or willing to pay their debts.

Now and then Coulter had the impulse to try to collect some accounts due him, but he was never harsh or stern in his language. In 1895 he had sold A. J. Clark, a New York wholesale dealer in butter, eggs, and poultry, 66 dozen eggs for which he was never

able to collect. He had a kinsman-through-marriage Sid J. Smyre, who lived in New York, whom Coulter asked to report on Clark. Smyre wrote, "He evidently is what we call a fakir in New York." In reporting some prospective New York customers about whom Coulter had asked, he said they were of a class in New York, who "if they can not get the best of you in a trade they think they will not go to *Heaven*." Coulter invoked the Golden Rule on some of his debtors but it had no effect. He finally used this device on a person who had been owing him a debt of \$236 for three years, but the delinquent refused to answer and never paid the debt. Another person who owed for lumber and nails for a coffin in which to bury his son, refused to pay.

When he was 80 years old Coulter wrote this polite dun to a person who had borrowed some articles and then sold them: "I write to ask you if you sold the Thresher repairs at your sale, and to ask you if you did, by what authority you did it. I am also informed that you have laid claim on my belt that I bought, and paid for; by what form of reasoning do you lay claim to the Belt, of whom did you buy it? Of whom did you buy it, especially as you admitted to me that the belt was mine, and you wanted to use it some, and said you would pay me for the use of it. This matter must be closed, so Please let me know whether you admit that it is mine, or do you claim it as your property? Please give this matter your prompt attention and oblige. If you have legal claim to the belt, I want to drop the matter and let you enjoy the use of your property. If it is mine I want it." Coulter had gone on this same person's note at the Morganton Industrial Bank, and had to pay it.

Levying on his generosity and sympathy for some families who had rented houses on "Cotton Mill Hill," Coulter let them go month after month without paying the \$5.00 a month house rent. To one whom he had befriended many times in small matters, he finally became bold enough to write the following letter: "I have always liked you as you are such an industrious old man, and I have tried to be good to you in any way I could, but you know that it is unreasonable for me to be out of the use of the money invested in the house, and the interest on the investment, and the upkeep of the house, and not get the rent. Now if you make it a rule to pay me every week, you will not find it hard. . . . With all good feeling and best wishes to you." In asking another renter to pay up, he closed, "You can see that this is reasonable. I am writing this letter in good will and without malice, just stating what I expect, and telling you what you are required to do, and with best wishes to you, I am."

Sometimes in trying to prevail on a debtor to pay, Coulter would

dip into sentimentalism by going into his own hard circumstances. From one he got this reply: "We were some what amused at your letter suppose you are an expurt at drawing a doleful Picture." Another person to whom Coulter doubtless had emphasized his pressing need for money, replied: "While you hant got money enuff to pay [for] a ½ bushel of Potatoes what mad you think I had money"; yet he was sending \$2.00 "and the rest I Will See you about sodan [soon] as I can fore times is hard and money is case [scarce] and now [no] hopes of git betered Sone. I will Send this By hand as hit cost to maule [mail] hit fore this is the last cent I got in this world and nun in the next won."

A person in Hot Springs who owed Coulter a lumber bill, in answer to a request for payment, replied that he was very conscious of the debt and that he would pay it as soon as he could collect from those who owed him, and suggested this clever device to aid him in making those collections: "I wish you would write me a letter mentioning a previous letter having been written and giving me the dickens in general." Another person seemed to have been in the same boat with the Hot Springs man. He wrote that "It seems I have more trouble to get money after I earn it than I do to earn it." In promising to pay a fertilizer note a person wrote in 1900, "Your not A ginst me i will Pa as Soon i Can you know Crops was Sorey I will not for git my debts." This was an appreciative reply to a gentle reminder of a debt: "I feel greatly obliged to you for your kindness in waiting on me so long. I think you a gentleman. I intend you will find me the same."

Sometimes Coulter would get replies so tearful and pathetic that it would take him a long time to muster up enough courage to ask another person to pay his debts, as this one from Yazoo County, Mississippi: "We Were overfloued here in Feby & also again in April & Water has not been off the land but a short time & what cotton & corn &c. The people planted & come up the Worms cut it up & grass Worms are here too. There was no crop made last year & Hog cholra Suept out the hogs last year & also hog cholra again this year. I lost 16 fine ones besides common ones. I have only one sow left & she is not much. There is no way on earth for us to get any money now B4 in Sept. I will arrange by Aug 15th or Sept & settle I will not beat you out of a cent. It never was known to have two high Waters in one year--& Last Year was first year to have a total failure on crops no one made no crops in our country here last year & We never had two High waters in one year B4. Dont give me out I am



certainly up against it & is not my fault." Coulter probably accepted this letter as full payment of the debt.

When the W. J. Oliver Construction Company failed to pay a debt of \$145.75 Coulter attached some of their cars to the rails of a sidetrack with log chains and put the case in the hands of a lawyer. On a few occasions he sought to have the Post Office Department in Washington warn debtors that they were using the mails to defraud when they failed to pay up; but it seems that such attempts were lost in Washington red tape.

Coulter tried methods other than writing letters. Sometimes he would make trips and by personal interviews with debtors he would attempt to make collection. Also he placed accounts in the hands of collection agencies: the National Collection Agency of Washington, D. C. and the Anglice Collecting Agency of Bristol, Tennessee. The Sheehy Mercantile Agency of Lexington, Kentucky charged 10% on all accounts of \$100 or more and as much as 25% of \$25.00 or less. The Creditors Surety Company of Atlanta used the system of selling to the highest bidder accounts which had not been paid. In 1922 they advertised for sale more than 1,000 accounts in the State of North Carolina alone.

Somewhat akin to collection agencies were companies which audited railroad freight bills and charged 50% of what they collected with no other expense to their customers. The Atlas Auditing Company of Greensboro used the slogan: "We turn your old freight bills into dollars." Coulter sent some of his freight bills to the Freight Audit and Adjustment Company of Washington, D. C. and probably did some business with the Greensboro company. It often happened that shippers were overcharged by agents who were so busied with other duties around the railway station that they never completely informed themselves on the intricacies of railway tariffs. The result was that so many shippers were overcharged that auditing companies grew up and thrived on 50% of the overcharges they were able to discover in these freight bills.

Shippers had other complaints against railways and express companies too. Sometimes the railways were very slow and negligent in providing cars, but not all the time were they to blame. In certain seasons and in certain years there was a shortage of cars. During the years of the First World War, and especially in 1917, Coulter found great difficulty in securing cars in which to ship his lumber and other products of his mills. Express service during these years was sometimes very inefficient. In 1918 Coulter ordered a shipment of bags from Memphis. The express company received them on

February 21, and yet by April 6, they had not reached their destination.

Coulter never bought securities in the New York Stock Market. What funds he could spare from his business operations he invested in local enterprises. He bought stocks in the First National Bank of Morganton, in the Peoples Bank of Connelly Springs, in the Connelly Springs Light & Power Company, in the Catawba Creamery, in the Garrou Knitting Mills of Valdese, in the Blue Ridge Cotton Mill of Connelly Springs, in the Icard Cordage Mill, and probably in other enterprises. He was unlucky in some of these investments, especially in the Peoples Bank (as already noted) and in the Blue Ridge Cotton Mill.

Life insurance was not one of Coulter's continuing interests. In 1901 and for some years thereafter he was insured in the People's Mutual Benevolent Association of Raleigh and he was a director of the "Burke Division." His wife was insured for a few years with the North Carolina Mutual Aid and Home Protective Association, with its home office in Gastonia. There were no fixed premiums in either of these associations. When a member died an assessment was made against the other members. Coulter carried fire insurance on his store building and goods while he was in the mercantile business and he carried throughout his life insurance on his residence. He always carried this insurance with the Farmers Mutual Fire Insurance Association of North Carolina (Catawba and Burke Branches). The state legislature chartered this association in 1893, with amendments in 1895. When in 1899 North Carolina provided for an Insurance Commissioner, this association came under his jurisdiction and supervision. For many years Coulter was vice president. Members were assessed yearly in amounts necessary to pay for the fire losses. The assessments generally amounted to 15¢ to 25¢ on the \$100 carried. In 1900 it ran to 30¢. In 1933 there were 3,500 members with insurance amounting to \$5,000,000.

Much could be said in assessing Coulter as a businessman and his business methods. He received such comments as these: "Please accept many thanks for the kindness you have shown me and the honest gentlemanly way you have always dealt," and "I have read your circular over very carefully, and I like very much your way of doing business." He always liked to put a personal touch in his business correspondence, irrespective of who the person was or where he lived. And such letters invited personal touches in return. A rye customer in Ivanhoe down in Sapmson County wrote: "Slip cog and come down here and I will show you how to catch fish and kill

Squirrels. I caught an even hundred yesterday without going out of sight of my front door. Can sit on my front porch and see ½ dozen Squirrels at a time."

Coulter's office moved in the course of time from one place to another in the village. As long as he was in the mercantile business his quarters were in the store building. Then he moved to a small brick building on "Main Street," where he stayed for many years, going from there to a small frame building, built for the purpose, and lastly to the warehouse which he had built for the Farmers Union. On his desk in front he had a set of pigeonholes, which Sanford Cline had made for him in 1895, and into these holes he distributed either alphabetically or according to subject matter, the letters received. Periodically he would need to remove these letters and file them away. He destroyed only wastepaper—he had a feeling that any letter he had ever received he might need to refer to again.

He kept almost no carbon copies of letters he wrote. To keep track of prices he had quoted or propositions he had made he wrote on the outside of the envelope of the letter received, a gist of the information he had sent in reply. Sometimes he would request the correspondent to return the letter Coulter had written him, so there could be no mistake in filling orders.

Having developed a fine Spencerian handwriting, Coulter took pleasure in using it. By 1895 the business world was beginning to use typewriters, but not until about 1907 did Coulter begin using a typewriter, and for most of the time it was an Underwood; thought at times, an Oliver or a Remington.

Coulter's friendly nature drew every "Tom, Dick, and Harry," in the neighborhood to sit around in his office and bother him. He would generally greet them with "What's the good word with you?" He never had a secretary or anyone to help in his correspondence, except that sometimes one of his children would paste stamps on envelopes and rubber-stamp postal cards with "Connelly Springs, N. C." He had the inborn feeling that he must do everything, himself.

The result was that he got far behind at times in his correspondence. With all of his other activities it was almost a miracle that he kept up as well as he did. At one time, in 1912, he remarked, with a little exaggeration, that he had 200 letters to write. It is no mystery, then, why he received such letters as these two: "I have wrote you once before & have not hern a word from you yet & if you are not going to let me have them Will you kindly let me no at once," and "I would be glad indeed if you would give my business strict attention and



save me the humiliation of using language I wish to forget. I sent a little order for fence stuff—*no answer*—asked information—*no answer*—I presume you are busy furnishing Asheville with lumber at cut rates and freight paid &c. If you have time I would like to know what this stuff is worth or what you expect for it." He was referring to an order he had enclosed.

There is no wonder that sometimes he got mixed up on who had ordered what, as for instance when he sent a pig to a person who had ordered a turkey, and received in return this dressing-down: "Your error has been very expensive to me for I have driven 32 miles through mud and bad roads," to the depot. In 1939 when sales taxes were in vogue, Coulter, of course, had them to pay, and monthly at that. One month he forgot to comply, and in sending in the next month a check for both months, he observed, "I have too many details to look after for a man past 78, and mean all things well, but don't get all things done well." Even when he was younger he got an account mixed up in a rye deal and was not sure who owed whom. He wrote the person that if he owed him, "I will send check as freely as I would accept any amount from you that you might owe me." Coulter wanted the matter settled up, "and if I owe you a cent I want to pay it. I am 64 years old, and have to meet my God soon as I am not very stout and don't want a few dollars to stand between me and Judgment. [He was yet to live 22 years.] I am not any more inclined knowingly to cheat you out of one cent than I am to commit suicide."

But what was a more serious business lapse than sending a pig instead of a turkey or not knowing who owed for some rye, was to over-pay a bill or pay it twice. In 1931 he overpaid by \$34.20 for an Ontario grain drill and at least one more time he overpaid this company for farm machinery. In all instances they returned the excess. He paid twice the same bill from the Blue Ridge Lime and Stone Corporation of Asheville. In returning the second check they wrote, "We are very sorry to have to let this check come back to you. We would like to keep anything which looks like money, but you have already paid this account once so it belongs to you." The International Agricultural Corporation returned a check for \$500 with the explanation that he had already paid for all cars of fertilizers and owed "for only a few small shipments." Later they returned other overpayments.

Coulter seems to have developed a habit of overpaying for fertilizers, his pet business. In 1940 the Virginia-Carolina Chemical Company returned an overpayment of \$344.58 and added, "This

brings an expression of sincere appreciation of your valued business and abundant good wishes for a happy holiday season." The larger companies could not afford to be less than honest in the return of overpayments and double-payments; but it is presuming too much on human nature to assume that there were not instances where small concerns and individuals failed to make such returns.

In keeping his business records Coulter sometimes failed to deposit small checks and sometimes he deprived himself of making collections on notes and mortgages by neglecting to record them with the proper county officials in Morganton and by letting the time limit on them run out, before attempting to make collections.

Throughout Coulter's more than 60 years of active business he sold considerably more than a half-million dollars worth of products of his enterprises; his receipts were probably little more, counting other forms of income. At the end of a long and satisfactory life his purse was empty, but he agreed with Shakespeare that a purse was trash as compared with a good name. He left what he did not lose and what no one else could take from him—a good name.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE END OF THE ROAD

SINCE Coulter had filled his life with a variety of activities, he developed the reputation of having for sale or being able to get almost anything anyone might want. If anyone who had moved away wanted the news of Connelly Springs he wrote to Coulter. If anyone was in trouble and needed advice he went to him to get it. If anyone wanted information on almost any subject he wrote to him to get it. If anyone wanted a recommendation he went to him to get it. If anyone had lost a dog he expected Coulter to find it.

In 1896 a person at Mull Grove wanted Coulter to give him a recommendation as to "character, ability, integrity, frankness, and honesty." A woman in Icard wrote, "I wesh you wod pleas tel [let] me no what I must do for the best tha ar wearing my life out of me and what will I do for the Best please tel me rite me at wonce." A South Carolinian had bought a pig from a North Carolinian who refused to send him the registration papers. He wanted to know what he should do, "Sue him for damage?" A prospective millman wanted to know how to manufacture laths, what kind of machinery he needed, the price of laths, and how many could be cut from a cord of lath timber. A man living in the State of Washington wanted to know what that part of North Carolina was like where Coulter lived and also what sort of hogs the Essex breed was.

A man living across the South Mountains over in Belwood wrote Coulter that "yesterday Friday the 12 my hounds run a fox from the mountains through your town & caught it near Rutherford Colledge, the boys that folloured the hounds over to the Colledge left one of my dogs." He was "one of the finest fox hounds in the state." The man offered Coulter \$25.00 to find him—"I must have him at eny price."



Joe Dorsey who lived up "Huckleberry Street" beyond the Coulter's moved to Rutherfordton in the late 1890's, but he could never become reconciled to not living in Connelly Springs. For some years he corresponded with Coulter to get the news of all his acquaintances. Perry Chapman, who was in the Indian Territory in the 1890's, wanted all the news he could get about people whom he knew back in North Carolina. The most persistent, colorful, and long-continuing correspondent was Richard Linwood ("Dick") Gunter, who for more than twenty years, beginning in 1898, carried on an exciting correspondence as he drifted from the Atlantic to the Pacific, engaging in every kind of promotional and speculative business, which his mind could hit upon. He made fortunes (at least in his letters) and lost them, and always had in mind a good job he could give any of the Coulter boys who might want to go West. He frequently inquired about the Connelly Springs chums of his former days—Horace Goode, the Cassels boys, the McGalliard boys—and he could not forget to ask about that Connelly Springs sweetheart (Carrie Connelly) to whom he had proposed at least a half dozen times. Finally he married a German girl in Dubuque, Iowa; and his subsequent history "is lost in antiquity."

People who had once lived in Connelly Springs and had not moved far away liked to drop Coulter a letter now and then to engage in a little reminiscing or to inquire about mutual friends. In 1928 David P. Dellinger of Cherryville, who as a student at Rutherford College, had known Coulter, wrote him: "I remember a compliment you paid me at commencement 1898 when the Joint Debate between the Literary societies on the Free Silver 16 to 1 was the question, and you said nicer things of my effort than I've heard in the 30 years [afterwards]. . . . I have you at the top of my list of friends." The Rev. J. E. Abernethy, Pastor of the First Methodist Church, Lexington, when Coulter was 70 years old wrote him: "Well, old Dear, I am delighted to hear from you again. A message from you is always a genuine tonic for my soul. In the days of old you often scattered sunshine and flowers along my path, and since those days you have not forgotten me."

It seems that Coulter must have done the Sheriff of Cherokee County a favor by lending him \$5.00 when he was in the Connelly Springs area looking for some fugitive. When the Sheriff returned he wrote Coulter, "I am over Joyed for your Kindness and favor you Shode me one that I never will forget." And though the Sheriff had been a perfect stranger to Coulter, he signed himself, "Your Best friend Till Death."

Coulter's very special friend without end was "Hamp" Giles of Glen Alpine. The two were as one when it came to politics and to the promotion of education in Burke County. Giles wrote Coulter in 1900, "There is no man in Burke Co. I would rather do a favor for than you." Another old friend of long standing, who lived only a short distance to the westward near Valdese, was George A. Hauss. When Coulter was in a hospital for a week or two Hauss wrote him a long philosophical semi-religious letter, which Coulter always remembered for its contents and for the spirit that prompted it.

If someone wanted a guardian appointed or an executor of an estate, or a will written, Coulter could qualify and did on several occasions. His longest-drawnout guardianship was of the Wilkie children, Albert and Dora. They were the children of A. W. Wilkie who lived in the "Nation" and died there in 1890, leaving them orphans and an estate of \$147. Their mother had been a sister of Sanford Cline. Letters of guardianship were issued to Coulter by the Catawba County authorities and for some years, until the children became of age, he looked after their welfare, paying their expenses out of this meagre estate. He sent them to school at Penelope, a short distance west of Hickory, where Preacher C. M. Murchison was in charge. They were there for three or four years, and undoubtedly used up more than all the estate. Before Albert went to Penelope, Coulter had got him a fiddle; but Albert soon decided that he would rather go to school than fiddle—or probably he could do both at the same time. Later on, both Albert and Dora found lifetime partners and became good citizens. Coulter also became guardian for the Lindsey children of Rutherford College (Fred E., John W., Charles R., Robert P., and Cyrus E.). In 1901 he became guardian of Poley C. Townsend's eleven children and executor of the estate. The estate could not be "wound up" until the youngest (born in 1900) had reached the age of 21. In 1934 he became guardian for Mrs. K. E. Sain of West Hickory, and previously (in 1912) he had been appointed administrator of the Pink Zimmerman estate.

Julia A. Huitt, Lucy Ann's mother, died May 1, 1920. Her funeral sermon text was taken from Psalms 71:9, "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth." Coulter was in charge of the settlement of her estate, which was not large since her house, in Conover, had burned in the preceding January.

During Coulter's early business career he was living in an age when people around him were expecting to grow rich from inventions. His brother-in-law Jerome Bolick, who lived in Conover, had in 1888 secured a patent on a spring steel buggy wheel, "the most

complete wheel ever seen anywhere." Though "complete" the wheel was subject to improvement, and Bolick secured subsequent patents. He set up a business known as the Conover Carriage Works. It was later expanded greatly and became known then as Jerome Bolick Sons Company, "High-Grade Vehicles for the Wholesale Trade."

Horace Goode was sure by 1900 that he had invented a perpetual motion machine and was making ready to have it patented. Coulter was too busy merchandising and sawing lumber, shingles, and laths, to have his mind actively occupied in contriving inventions, but his friend Robert Sidney Abernethy had invented a "Bicycle Propulsion," which appeared to Coulter to be so practical that he bought a half-interest in the contraption. It now became his duty to get it patented. Patent lawyers aplenty were seeking business. Fritz Andrae of New York City offered his services for \$60.00, but in the light of hard times (this was in 1897) he would get the patent for half price cash. Snow & Company of Washington, D. C. got the patent for \$50.00. This patent was Number 589,952 and was granted on September 14, 1897. It was a strong spring coil to be attached to a bicycle, operating on the principle of a clock spring. On going downhill the spring would wind itself up, and the power thus stored would be expended in going up hills. Though the patent was publicized for bicycles, it was "designed for road-machines of any type or pattern." Coulter advertised on his letterheads: "Patentee of Bicycle Propulsion—a great thing—State, County, or Shop Rights for Sale." A Chicago firm offered to produce the attachment—"Will manufacture your goods and introduce them for you"—but it appears that the patent was still-born.

In addition to his many other activities Coulter found time to become a practical surveyor. He surveyed various tracts of land for his neighbors and other acquaintances. He was especially active for about ten years (1918-1927). The period of his land-buying was over by this time; but his liking for the outdoors and his love of nature led him into this surveying episode in his life.

The maxim which he quoted often and by which it seems he lived was "If you want a thing done, do it yourself." As previously noted, he would have no help in his office work. He even attended to many chores around his home. He considered it his prerogative to feed his livestock, especially his horses and mules. This habit may have saved his barn from burning in 1899. In going out to the building one evening he smelled burning leather. On investigation he found his buggy on fire (it was housed in a compartment of his barn). He had rented it to take Phil Burns home across the mountains one afternoon,



and when it had been brought back, the person returning it had left in it some burning pipe or cigar tobacco. Years later, one morning when he went out to the barn to do feeding, he was encountered by a masked robber. He grabbed a pitchfork and put the intruder to flight.

As has been stated previously, Coulter subscribed for and read more than two dozen newspapers (not all at the same time) and read the Bible through several times. Although making no attempt to keep up with current books on any subject, he generally had a book which he was in the process of reading. Instead of using a book mark, he would check every page with a pencil check mark as he read it. When he completed reading a book he would likely make a notation at the end, as he did with W. F. Cody (Buffalo Bill), *Pioneer Heroes*, "Finished reading Sept. 28th 1935 at 5 P. M." He was addicted to attending sales held in the settlement of estates, and more frequently than not he could be depended to buy any pile of books. In 1896 at the sale settling D. B. Gaither's estate he bought about 50 books for \$1.65.

He was interested in the histories of wars and sentimentally in the Civil War, in which his father had fought, as a Confederate soldier. When the movement was started to erect on the Morganton courthouse square a monument to the Confederate soldiers, he became a member of the Monument Association, and was doubtless present at the laying of the cornerstone on August 24, 1911.

He was both sentimentally and vitally interested in the First World War, for he had two sons in it and his business (as well as the business of the whole country) was affected by it. He with thousands of other Americans received a commission from Secretary of the Treasury William G. McAdoo to sell "War-Saving Certificate Stamps" and was "a Special Representative of the State Director to explain the plan of War Savings and to encourage Thrift among the People by the purchase of War Saving Stamps."

Coulter was adept at using the vernacular of the times and was not above coining words and expressions, himself: "Get a hump on you" (to hurry up); "Mark my word"; "I dare say"; "I am distressed for money"; "Cold as all git-out"; "In a bad way" (very sick or in trouble); "To dance in the pig trough" (when a younger sister got married before the older one the latter was left to dance in the pig trough); "As tight as Dick's hat band"; "To bless him out" or "To read his titles clear" (to strongly censure a person); "Answer quick"; "Your name is Dennis" (to belittle a person in a friendly if not even an affectionate way); "Disremember" (not to remember); "Pro-

miscuous" (miscellaneous); "Corramption" (a mixture of plunder); "Devilment" (mischief and also applied to plunder).

Not until his later years did he become interested in his family history and then when his mother (who knew all about kinfolks to the 32nd cousins) and many of the old people who might have told him much, had died, it was too late to get a great many facts. But his cousin John C. Coulter had earlier become interested and not only depending on old people's memories but also on the researches of John's brother Victor A. Coulter, John gathered a great deal of reliable family history. John Ellis began keeping a diary in 1926 and continued it a little more than a dozen years. In it he was certain to record any happening to his kindred that he learned about or any reminiscences that they might give him.

He frequently visited his relatives, living mostly in Catawba and Gaston counties. Such visits were made much more easy and convenient after he began driving an automobile—heretofore such visits had been on horseback or in a buggy. He bought his first automobile in 1919—a secondhand Cadillac. His automobiles were almost invariably secondhand Buicks, Fords, and so on. During the year 1933 he drove 4,309 miles. He went to Mount Hebron Lutheran Church in Hildebran every Sunday with his wife and after church services they made it a custom to spend the rest of the day visiting with kinfolks and acquaintances. He had a wreck or two but miraculously escaped injury.

He developed the habit not only of sending the *Morganton News-Herald* to all his children, as heretofore stated, but also to present as Christmas presents pocketknives to his children and to anyone whom he knew well, even including the governor of the state. In 1922 he gave 34 knives as Christmas presents.

He was a familiar figure on the streets of Connelly Springs (but mostly in his office) until he had entered his eighties. He made at least daily visits to Fred Hudson's store to drink a Pepsi Cola. In 1941 he decided to go out of active business; his last dealings were in fertilizer with the Virginia-Carolina Chemical Company. In answer to a letter he had written to M. S. Arney to whom he had sold much fertilizer, who used it in certain Duke Power Company projects around Morganton, Arney replied: "It has been a real pleasure in the past to do business with you and I sincerely regret that you are no longer going to handle fertilizer but I shall always remember our friendly relations in our business dealings and I thank you for your letter recommending to me your successors to the line of fertilizer which you have been handling." To the widow of his old friend,

Samuel Asbury, he wrote "The ravages of time are making inroads on me, so much so that I have to quit all business; am past 80 years old." Even before the sentimental respect for old age had mellowed people's expressions regarding Coulter, the Clerk of the Catawba County Superior Court wrote him, "I prize very highly your acquaintance, and regret that Catawba County ever lost, as a citizen, such a splendid Christian gentleman, as you are."

Coulter was, no doubt, somewhat surprised, though thankful, that he was living year after year; for several times he had been very ill, even when a boy and a young man. In 1897 he wrote to his father and mother that he had for a few days been too sick to go to the store and that for four days he had been unable to eat anything and only could drink broth in which Graham bread had been soaked. In 1927 he noted that on account of illness he "did not get to any Christmas service, first time I have missed a Sabbath Service in 10 years." In 1934 he was in the Davis Hospital in Statesville for ten days. Time did not hang heavy on him there, for in addition to his family and other kindred seeing him, he was visited by those with whom he had business dealings, as Wickliffe of the fertilizer company, and by people who had worked for him forty years or more before. He got a "wonderful letter from Bro. G. A. Hauss" and another from the Board of Education and flowers from Mount Hebron Church. Also a little diary which he kept took up some of his time.

He had been bothered with asthma from the time he was a mere lad, at which time on one occasion he almost suffocated and only by being carried to a window for fresh air was his life saved. Among the cures which he tried in his adult life was sleeping with the windows of his room wide open. He became a regular "Major Ozone fresh air fiend," and this treatment seemed to have been quite effective. Another treatment which he tried for awhile was a product of Dr. J. W. Blosser & Son of Atlanta: "A pleasant, Positive Cure. 'It Hits the Spot' Dr. Blosser's Catarrh Cure. Cures Catarrh, Bronchitis, Asthma, etc. Smoke-Vapor Inhalation. No Tobacco—No Opium." It came in the form of cigarettes or could be smoked in a pipe. With such ailments Coulter found it easiest to sleep sitting up in his chair, and frequently after supper when the rest of the family would be sitting around the open fire carrying on their customary conversations and activities, he would be sound asleep in his chair as surely ensconced there as if he were in bed.

Patent medicine companies got hold of his name and address, and a stream of their advertisements for definite cures of everything, came in steadily, including "Charlie White-Moon, the Cow-boy



Herbalist, Exponent of God's Medicines, Roots and Herbs, References: The Books of the Holy Bible. Endorsements: All Nature. Authority: God's Promises."

Coulter was 5 feet and 9 inches high. When 70 years old he weighed 173 pounds. He carried his pocket change in a shot pouch, made of the heaviest sail cloth, and he wore a large open-face watch attached to a stout chain. In 1897 J. W. Hardister, jeweler in Newton, replaced the balance staff and old jewels, all for \$2.00. Up through middle life he wore a mustache but was clean shaven thereafter. By the time he was 30 he had become bald, giving up thereafter all remedies to make his hair grow and coming to like his bald head. He had probably tried unsuccessfully "Clawson's Electric Hair Restorer! Hair restored on Bald Heads. Recollect it is the only Restorer in all the World, and cheap at any price."

For the last three or four years of his life Coulter was confined to his home, rarely moving out of the house beyond the front porch. During his last days his mind wandered, but he could remember clearly his acquaintances of a half century earlier and his business affairs of that time; but concerning more recent events he became mixed-up and forgetful. He died on February 16, 1947, nearly 87 years old. The *Morganton News-Herald* reporting his death, referred to him as "one of Burke county's oldest and most highly respected citizens." Continuing, "He moved to Burke County 55 years ago and for more than fifty years took an active part in the educational, civic, and religious affairs of the county. For 45 years [in fact only 37 years] he was a member of the Burke County Board of Education, for part of that time serving as chairman. When, because of failing health, he resigned in the fall of 1941, he was presented with a testimonial of 'long and faithful service to the interests of the children of Burke county.'" He was buried in the Huffman Graveyard fronting eastward toward the South Mountains, a view of which he never tired. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills."

His wife, Lucy Ann, continued to live on until nearly 90 years of age, dying on May 5, 1952. She was buried beside him.









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